GHADIR

Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr
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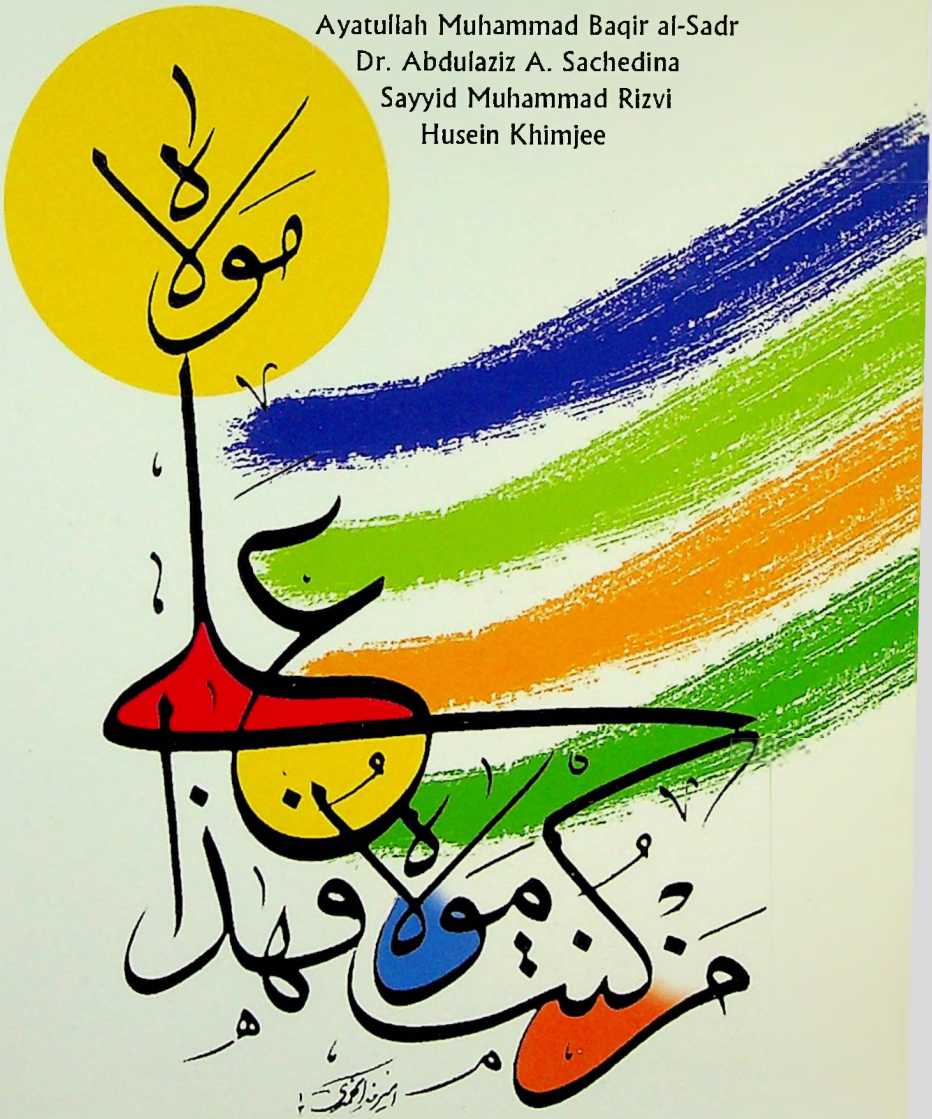

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of Allah, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate

Sadr, Muhammad Baqir, 1931-1979.
Ghadir/by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr[et al].- Qum: Ansariyan, 2005.
104 P.
ISBN: 964-438-177-7
1. Day of Ghadir Khum (Shia). 2. Ali ibn Abi Talib, Imam I, 600 661 – Proof of Caliphate. I. Haseltina, P. Tr. II. Title
297.45 BP223.5

غدیر خم انگلیسی

GHADIR

Athor: Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr
Dr. Abdulaziz A Sachedina – Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi – Husein Khimjee
Translator: Dr. P. Haseltine
Publisher: Ansariyan Publications – Qum
Third Reprint: 2000 – 1379 – 1421
Forth Reprint: 2005 – 1384 - 1426
Thamin Al-a'immah Press Pages: 104
Copies: 2000 Size: 145 x 210 mm
ISBN: 964-438-177-7

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Ansariyan Publications
22, Shohada St.,
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Islamic Republic Of Iran
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www.ansariyan.org & www.ansariyan.net

Introduction

The caravan returning from the *Hujjatul-Widdah* (the Final Pilgrimage) of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his progeny, was halted unexpectedly. The archangel Jibreel (Gabriel) had come with the message from Allah: 'O Apostle! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people' (Qur'an 5:67).

The place where the Muslims had stopped was at Ghadir Khum. The Prophet delivered a sermon and appointed Imam Ali, peace be upon him, as his successor. His words were: 'O Muslims! Who is more worthy [in the eyes of] the believers than their ownselves?' The audience replied: 'Allah and His Messenger know better.' Hearing this, the Prophet declared: 'I am the Master (*Mawla*) of the faithful and I have rights over them even more than what they have over themselves. Therefore of whomever I am the *Mawla*, (this) Ali is his *Mawla*.'

The first to congratulate Imam Ali was Umar ibn al-Khattab who said: 'Excellent! How fortunate you are O Abul Hasan! Now you have become my master as well as of all the Muslims.'

This all happened 1,400 years ago. But alas! The events following the death of the Prophet took a different turn and Imam Ali was by-passed as the *mawla* or the leader of the Muslims.

Various reasons have been given for this, including:

1. By *mawla* the Prophet meant 'friend.' It is difficult to accept this. Would the Prophet have stopped the whole caravan to declare his friendship with Imam Ali and to make friendship to Imam Ali obligatory?
2. The Prophet did not appoint anyone and expected the *Ummah* to make a decision for itself. How can this be? Did the person who foresaw the fall of Khusrow and Caesar not see the plight of his *Ummah* after he was gone and not appoint a successor? And what of the occasions when he said: 'Whoever helps me today will be my successor' and 'Tomorrow I will give the standard of the army to the one who will be my successor'?

There is far too much evidence to show that the Prophet did indeed appoint his successor. However, history took its own course and what happened cannot be undone now. As a result, we have two major schools of thought — Sunnis and Shi'as. The followers of the two schools of thought are Muslims and this cannot be denied or challenged. The ways and means of co-existence have to be identified. There has to be a healthy discussion between the two schools of thought with a view to increasing understanding between them. The declaration of *kufr* does not help the cause of understanding. The Muslims have far too many enemies. Let us make sure that our enemies do not use our differences, such as they are, to thwart our unity.

The event of Ghadir has to be looked at from a positive perspective. Ghadir should provide a means of uniting the Muslim *Ummah* and teach us lessons in leadership which are essential if Muslims are to once again achieve the position of eminence.

Let the Eid of Ghadir, that we so enthusiastically celebrate the world over, be our pivot towards Islamic unity and leadership. Let our Sunni brethren present their viewpoints keeping in mind the two principles of Islamic unity and leadership.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Abdulaziz Sachedina, Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi and Brother Husein

Khimjee for their contributions. We would also like to thank Al-Tawhid Institute for allowing us to reprint the translation of *A Study on the Question of Al-Wilaya* by As-Shahid Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.

Ghulam Abbas Sajan
President
Islamic Shi'a Ithna-Asheri
Jama'at of Toronto
July 11, 1990

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About the Author

Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was a well-known and widely respected figure throughout the Muslim world. His twin books *Falsafatuna* (Our Philosophy) and *Iqtasaduna* (Our Economics) have been widely acclaimed as masterpieces in bridging the gap between Islamic tradition and contemporary Muslim intellectuals. He also wrote on *Al-Usul al-Mantiquiyah li-l Istiqra'* (The Logical Foundations of Induction), *Al-Bank al-Laribawi* (Towards a Non-Usurious Islamic Bank), *Al-Insan al-Mu'asir wa-l Mushkilah al-Ijtima'iyah* (Contemporary Man and Social Problems) and many other original works. His popularity was obviously unpalatable to the satanic Takriti clique in Iraq and both he and his numerous followers were continually harassed. He had been under intermittent house arrest since he declared his open support for the Islamic Movement in Iran and expressed the hope of bringing about a similar change in Iraq. Many of his close followers have been executed.

Ayatullah al-Sadr, who was martyred in April 1980 with his sister Bint al-Huda by the tyrant Saddam Takriti, raised the banner of opposition to the regime in the glorious tradition of his predecessors going back to Imam Husayn, upon whom be peace, and took up the struggle in the Name of Allah, the Annihilator of Tyrants.

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Chapter 1

A Study on the Question of Al-Wilaya

By As-Shahid Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr
(Translated by Dr P Haseltine)

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon Muhammad and his Family (*Ahl al-Bayt*).

Some modern scholars view Shi'ism as an accidental manifestation in Islamic society, and see the Shi'a as a part of the main chorus of the Islamic community; a result of the events which took place with the passing of time and of specific social developments, which in turn led to the formation of a special sectarian attitude within this larger body, and then gradually expanded into a sect. Having assumed this fact, these scholars disagree as to the actual events and developments which led to the growth of this manifestation and to the birth of this sect.

Some assume that the supposed political activities of 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' formed the basis for the formation of the Shi'a. Others, however, attribute the appearance of Shi'ism to the *khilafah* of Imam Ali, prayers and peace be upon him, and to the political and social position which was established during that era, according to the events which took place. While others assume that the appearance of the Shi'a was hidden in events which occurred later than this in the historical process of Islamic society.

What has encouraged many of these scholars to the assumption

and the belief that Shi'ism was an accidental manifestation in Islamic society is, in my opinion, the fact that the Shi'a in the early times only constituted a small part of the whole Islamic community. This fact has given them the impression that non-Shi'ism was the original foundation of Islamic society, and that Shi'ism was an accidental and exceptional manifestation, whose causes must lie in the development of the parties opposed to the situation of the day.

However, it is hardly logical to define principles or exceptions, or bases and deviations, according to largeness or comparative fewness of numbers, and it is erroneous to consider non-Shi'ism as the basis according to its large numbers, and to consider Shi'ism as a deviant, accidental manifestation because this disagrees with the fundamental nature of doctrinal divisions. We have often found a particular doctrinal division within the development of a single religion founded upon the basis of some difference in the definition of the tenets of that religion without there being two equal doctrinal divisions according to numbers. Yet they may be equal according to their purity of origin and equally expressive of the religion, while differing as regards to its basic character. Thus it is not in any way permissible for us to construct our conceptions of the internal doctrinal divisions within Islam, of the Shi'a and others, according to numerical strength.

Similarly, it is not permissible for us to link the birth of the Shi'a presentation of Islam in the development of Islam with the birth of the word 'Shi'a' or 'Shi'ism' (*al-Tashayyu'*) as a technical term or special name for a clearly defined group of Muslims; for the birth of technical terms is one matter and the growth of conventions and presentations is quite another.

Even if we did not find the word 'Shi'a' in the normal language used during the lifetime of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family and grant him peace, or after his death, this would not mean that the Shi'a presentation of Islam and its attitudes did not exist. It is in this spirit that we must deal with the

question of Shi'ism (*al-Tashayyu'*) and the Shi'a, and answer the two following questions:

a) How did Shi'ism come into existence?
b) How did the Shi'a appear?

How Shi'ism came into existence

As for the first question, we can regard Shi'ism as a natural consequence of Islam, and as a representation of the presentation of Islam which it was obliged to attain if it was to protect its healthy growth.

We can in fact infer a logical inference to this presentation of Islam from the faith which the Prophet commanded, according to the nature of its formation and the conditions which surrounded it. The Prophet was assuming the leadership of a revolutionary faith, and inducing radical transformations of the customs, structures and concepts of society. The path for such a task of transformation was obviously not a short one, but was rather long and protracted because of the vast spiritual divisions between *jahiliyyah* and Islam. The faith which the Prophet practiced had to begin with the *jahili* man and raise him to new institutions, thus converting him into an Islamic man who could carry the new light, and uproot the trunk and roots of *jahiliyyah* from his heart and mind.

And the Great Leader made astonishing headway in the task of transformation in a very short time, but it was necessary for this task of transformation to continue on its way even after the death of the Prophet, who knew that his death was near some time before it actually occurred and he disclosed this openly in 'The Pilgrimage of Farewell' (*Hujjat al-Wada*); so his death was not unexpected.

This means that he had ample time to contemplate the future of the faith after his demise, even if we disregard the factors of contact with the Unseen and the divine protection for Islam stemming from revelation. In light of this we can see that the Prophet had three possible paths before him to ensure the

proper consequences of the future of the faith.

The First Path

The first path would have been to adopt a passive attitude towards the future, and to be content with the part which he had played in leading and directing the *da'wah* during his lifetime, leaving its future to circumstance and chance.

It is of course unthinkable to attribute such passivity to the Prophet because it grows from two different possibilities, neither of which can be levelled against the Prophet. The first possibility is the belief that such passivity and disregard would have no effect upon the future of the *da'wah*, and that the *Ummah* which would follow his *da'wah* would be capable of acting independently in a manner which would protect the *da'wah* and ensure it against deviation.

But this belief is totally indefensible, and indeed the essential nature of things would seem to indicate the opposite, because the *da'wah* was by its very nature a radical and transformatory factor, which aimed at building a new community from which all *jahili* principles would be removed. It was, however, also prone to dangerous possibilities when deprived of its leader and of all guidance. And such perils were sure to arise if no allowances were made for the vacuum left by the Prophet's death, which would leave the *Ummah* without any guidance, and from the subsequent needs of the *Ummah* to adopt an extemporaneous attitude in the shadow of the massive difficulties posed by the death of the Prophet. Had the Prophet left the *Ummah* without any guidance regarding the development of Islam, it would have had to face the problem of conducting itself without its leader while facing the most dangerous issues ever to confront Islam without possessing any prior experience thereof. Such a state of affairs would also have required that the *Ummah* adopt an immediate policy as to how to conduct itself in spite of the danger posed by the problem, because the vacuum could not be allowed to continue. And this speedily-arranged policy would have had to be instituted just when the *Ummah* was suffering the

staggering shock of losing its Great Leader. This shock must obviously have shaken the foundations of logical thought and exacerbated any disorders, and it was perhaps this shock that forced one of the *sahaba* to announce that the Prophet had not died and would not die.

These are the dangers which might have arisen from any religious immaturity on the part of the *sahaba*, who had not yet attained the standard at which the Prophet could feel satisfied, of a reasonable reaction to the *khilafah* after his death, within the religious framework of Islam, and of their ability to overcome the hidden contradictions which existed, and continued to exist, in the minds of the Muslims, regarding their divisions into the *Muhajirun* and *Ansar*, Quraysh and the rest of the Arab tribes of Makkah and Medina.

There are also the dangers which arose from the existence of anonymous factions within the *Ummah* who acted treacherously from the time of the Prophet onwards. This is the faction which the Qur'an calls the *munafiqun* (hypocrites). When we add to them the large numbers who converted to Islam after the conquests, becoming Muslims for material gains and not out of spiritual awakening, we can begin to assess the danger posed by these groups, who would find a chance to grow and expand in the vast vacuum which would result from the absence of the guiding leadership.

Obviously the acceptance of such a perilous position after his death could not be envisaged by any ideological leader, let alone by the Seal of the Prophets.

Indeed Abu Bakr was loathe to leave the arena without ensuring a positive future for the government by the appointment of one who could fully comprehend and control its affairs...

Similarly, the people rushed to Umar when he was struck down saying: 'O Leader of the Faithful, if you would only set out a covenant,'[1] fearing the vacuum of authority which the *khalifah*

[1] *Tarikh al-Tabari*, 5/26.

would leave behind him, in spite of the political and social concentration which the *da'wah* had attained during the 10 years following the death of the Prophet. And Umar designated six people to calm their fears. Umar recognized the extent of the danger posed by the circumstances of as-Saqifa, and the possible complications which might have arisen from the improvised nature of the *khilafah* of Abu Bakr, when he said: 'The appointment (*ba'yah*) of Abu Bakr would have been a fatal mistake had Allah not protected us from its evil.'[2]

Abu Bakr himself regretted the speed with which he had accepted authority and taken over its difficult problems, although he had sensed the danger of the situation and the necessity for a quick solution, when he said, when blamed for accepting the authority: 'Indeed the Messenger of Allah had died and the people had only just emerged from *jahiliyyah*. So I feared that they would be subject to temptations, and my associates encouraged me therein.'[3]

If all this is true then it must also be evident that the Pioneer and the Prophet of Islam felt the danger of a negative attitude more acutely, and understood the exact nature of the situation and needs of the task of radical transformation, which he had instigated in the *Ummah* so newly emerged from *jahiliyyah*, more profoundly than Abu Bakr.

The second possibility which could explain the passivity of the Leader towards the future and progress of Islam after his death is that he did not seek to protect Islam from this peril, although aware of the great danger posed by such a stance, because he viewed Islam advantageously and was only interested in protecting it during his lifetime, so that he could receive benefits and gains from it while uninvolved in its future protection after his death.

This explanation is unthinkable in the case of the Prophet, or even if we do not regard him as a Prophet, closely involved with

[2] *Sharh al-Nahj* of Ibn Hadid, 6/46.

[3] *Tarikh al-Tabari*, 3/20.

Allah, May He be Praised and Exalted, in every aspect of Islam, and simply consider him as a leader passionately committed to his cause similar to any other. We cannot cite any example of a totally devoted leader who sacrificed himself in the interests of Islam as did the Prophet until the last moment of his life. In fact his whole career proves this point, and even when on his deathbed and suffering greatly from his illness he was deeply concerned with a campaign which he had planned, and the force which he had dispatched under Usama, and ordered them saying: 'Stand ready with Usama's forces! Convoke the forces of Usama! Send out Usama's contingents!' He repeated this although losing consciousness from time to time.[4] For indeed the concern of the Prophet regarding this military campaign alone was so profound that he expended all his efforts upon it even on his deathbed, and although he knew that he would die before he could reap the rewards of this campaign, he did not allow this to interfere with his task even until his last breath. So how can we even consider the opinion that the Prophet was neither preoccupied with the future of Islam, nor planning against the expected dangers which would confront its safety after his death?

Finally, during the lifetime of the Prophet there is one act which is itself sufficient to negate the first assumption, while also proving that the Prophet was by no means passive towards the future of Islam, nor unaware of the dangers therein or unconcerned thereby. Furthermore, this act has been related in the authentic works of both the Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. It is that Umar al-Khattab was amongst a group of men in the house when the Prophet, who was about to die, said: 'Bring me parchment and pen so that I may write something for you after which you shall never go astray.'[5]

In fact this act of the Prophet, which is generally viewed as authentic, illustrates clearly that he was deeply concerned about

[4] *Tarikh al-Kamil* of Ibn Athir and others.

[5] *Musnad Ahmad*, 1/300; *Sahih Muslim*, Vol 2, at the end of *Al-Wasaya*; and *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol 1, Kitab as-Salh.

the dangers which had to be faced in the future, and recognized the need to plan ahead so as to protect the *Ummah* from deviation, and save it from inattentiveness and disintegration. It is thus totally impossible to substantiate any claim of passivity levelled against the Prophet.

The Second Path

The second path is that the Prophet adopted a positive policy concerning the future of Islam after his death and planned towards it by advocating the appointment of a *shura* (counsel) which would be responsible for the affairs of Islam and leading the *Ummah*. This *shura* would be composed of the first generation of the faithful, the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, who would represent the *Ummah*, while formulating the foundations for the future government and for the leadership of Islam as it evolved further.

It is obvious, however, that the nature of things and the actual events which took place concerning the Prophet, the *da'wah* and the faithful refute this hypothesis and disprove the claim that the Prophet followed this method and sought to invest the leadership of Islam immediately after his death to the *Ummah* as represented in a *shura* composed of the initial generation of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*.

We shall now examine some of the points which clarify this.

1. Had the Prophet adopted a positive attitude towards the future of the *da'wah* and intended that a *shura* be set up immediately after his death and that the leadership of the *da'wah* be handed over to someone elected according to this principle, he would have found it absolutely necessary to educate the *Ummah* and the faithful concerning the principles of *shura* with its rules and details, and to give it a form which reflected the divine and holy sanction, while also preparing the Islamic society both mentally and spiritually to accept this system. This would have been vital because the Islamic society grew from a confederacy of clans which had not functioned according to the political principles of *shura* before Islam, but had in fact

generally functioned according to tribal leadership, in which power, wealth and the principles of inheritance had a large part to play.

We can easily discover that the Prophet did not seek to educate his followers concerning the principles, legal details and theoretical concepts of *shura*, because such a policy, had it been carried out, would surely have been reflected and embodied in the *ahadith* transmitted from the Prophet, or in the mentality of the *Ummah*, at least as far as the earliest generation is concerned — the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* — who would have been obliged to implement the organization of the *shura*. We do not, however, find any clearly defined legal evidence from the organization of a *shura* in the prophetical *ahadith*. As for the mentality of the *Ummah* or of the earliest generation thereof we can find no discernible reflection of any attempt to educate them to accept this.

Indeed this generation subscribed to two different trends: the first is led by the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the People of the House of the Prophet), while the other is exemplified by those present at as-Saqifa and the *khalifah* who only arose after the death of the Prophet. The first trend was composed of those who believed in the *wisaya* and *imama*, and there is no reflection of any belief in the concept of *shura* amongst them. As for those who subscribed to the second trend, all the proofs and arguments which occurred during their lifetime and during their careers undoubtedly indicate that they neither believed in *shura* nor established their careers according to it, and the same is true of the rest of the groups who were alive at the time of the Prophet's death.

The following narrative proves this: when Abu Bakr's illness became acute he appointed Umar ibn al-Khattab and ordered Uthman to write down the pledge. So he wrote:

'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the pledge of Abu Bakr, the *khalifah* of the Messenger of Allah,

to the believers and Muslims. Peace be upon you, and I extol Allah to you. I hereby appoint Umar ibn al-Khattab as your liege. So hear and obey!' Then 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Awf came to him and said: 'How are you this morning, O *khalifah* of the Prophet of Allah?' So he replied: 'I am dying, and you have aggravated my condition because I appointed one of you and you have all become upset, as you all aspire to this office yourselves!'[6]

It is clear from the appointment of this *khalifah* and from the disapproval of the opposition that Abu Bakr did not consider the establishment of a *shura* but believed that he had the right to stipulate the next *khalifah* and that this situation obliged obedience on the part of the Muslims. For this reason he ordered them to hear and obey, and did not simply nominate Umar, but obliged them to accept his stipulation.

We should also point out that Umar himself believed that he had the right to appoint a *khalifah* to rule over the Muslims, and appointed a group of six people and charged them with choosing his successor from amongst themselves, without any reference to the rights of the rest of the Muslims in this election.

Thus the rationale of the function of a *shura* was not exemplified in Umar's appointment of a *khalifah* to succeed him, just as it had not been exemplified in the method employed by the first *khalifah*. Indeed, when the people asked Umar about the appointment of the next *khalifah*, he said: 'If one of two men were still alive I would charge him with the *khilafah*, and they are Salim the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfa, and Abu Ubayda al-Jarrah. For if Salim was still alive I would not have designated a *shura*.'[7]

Also Abu Bakr told 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Awf, while conversing with him on his deathbed: 'I wish I had asked the Prophet of Allah about the appointment of a successor so that nobody

[6] *Tarikh al-Yaqubi*, 2/126-127.

[7] *Tabaqat ibn Sa'd*, 3/248.

could have contested it.'[8]

Furthermore one of those present when the *Ansar* assembled at as-Saqifa to appoint Sa'd ibn Ubada, said: 'If the *Muhajirun* from Quraysh disagree they will say, "We are the *Muhajirun* and we are his clan and his partisans." But some of the *Ansar* said, "So we shall say, "We shall have a *khalifah* and you shall have a *khalifah*. For we will never be content with anything other than this!"'

When Abu Bakr spoke to them he said: 'We are the Muslims and the *Mujahirun* who were the first to adopt Islam, and for this reason the people must follow us, because we are the clan of the Prophet of Allah and of pure Arab lineage.'

And when the *Ansar* suggested that the *khilafah* should alternate between the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, Abu Bakr rejected it, saying: 'When the Prophet of Allah came to the Arabs they found it difficult to leave the religion of their forefathers and differed and disagreed with him, then Allah chose the first *Muhajirun* to believe in him from his people, and they became the first to worship Allah in this world, and were his partisans and kinsfolk, who have the most right to rule after him, which would only be disputed by the unjust.'

But Al-Habbab ibn al-Mundhir, who encouraged the people in their determination, said: 'Stand firmly in support of your claim, for these people are under your care and protection, and if they refuse we shall have a *khalifah* and they shall have one!'

So Umar replied and said: 'Impossible! Two swords cannot be sheathed in one scabbard. So only the false claimant, the deviant, or someone willing to risk his own destruction would dispute with us concerning the rule of Muhammad and his legacy, for we are his partisans and his clan.'[9]

If we wish to scrutinize this point we must take into consideration

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[8] *Tarikh al-Tabari*, 4/52.

[9] See the texts concerning as-Saqifa in *Sharh an-Nahj*, 6/6-9.

the method of appointment used by the first and second *khulafah*; the fact that this method was not rejected; the prevalent atmosphere which surrounded the opposing factions of the leading personalities of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* on the day of as-Saqifa; the obvious inclinations of the *Muhajirun* in deciding that the authority should rest with them and not with the *Ansar*; the emphasis which they placed upon the principle of inheritance which gave the clan of the Prophet the most right to succession; the willingness of many of the *Ansar* to accept the idea of two *khulafah* — one of whom would be from the *Ansar*; who won the *khilafah* on that day; and that he regretted not having asked the Prophet about his successor.

In fact all this proves, without a shade of doubt, that this first generation of the Islamic *Ummah*, which also included those who came to power after the death of the Prophet, did not give any thought to the concept of *shura* as regards the appointment of the *khilafah* nor did they possess a clearly defined understanding of its principles; so how can we believe that the Prophet had instituted a policy of educating his followers concerning the legal and theoretical concepts of *shura*, to prepare the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* to submit the leadership of Islam to one elected according to these principles, when we cannot find any actual implementation of this method, or clear understanding thereof, amongst this generation!

Similarly, we cannot believe that the Prophet set down this method and its details legally and theoretically, but did not attempt to familiarize and educate the Muslims in this respect.

This in fact proves the aforementioned theory that the Prophet did not present the principle of *shura* to the *Ummah* as an alternative to more traditional methods, because it is improbable that such a principle could have been presented and then disappeared completely from the reports of all sections of this society.

Other obvious points which further illustrate this are as follows:

a) The principle of *shura* was a new one for this area, which had not experienced any sort of highly developed government before the time of the Prophet, and thus required extensive education to acquaint its inhabitants as to its exact nature.

b) The *shura* as a concept was unclear and could not be presented or put into action without its details, rules, and guidelines for preference in the case of dispute being clarified. Moreover, should these guidelines be based upon numbers and quantities, or upon qualities and experience, or upon other attributes which would facilitate the clarification of the concept and render it immediately functional upon the death of the Prophet?

c) In fact *shura* was an expression of the *Ummah's* implementation of authority according to consultation and the determination of the people concerning their government. The responsibility for this lay with all those who were involved in *shura*. If this *shura* was legally acceptable and to be put into practice immediately after the death of the Prophet, the majority of the people should have been previously instructed concerning it, so that each could adopt a positive attitude towards *shura* and bear his share of the responsibility.

All these points prove that the Prophet had he wished that a *shura* be set up to choose a successor after his death, would have had to disseminate the concept of *shura* on a wide and profound scale to prepare his followers psychologically and to fill any gaps in their understanding, while also explaining the details which would make it a workable concept. The presentation of this concept on this level and wide scale could not have been carried out by the Prophet and then disappear totally from the minds of all the Muslims who were alive at the time of the Prophet's death.

There is of course the possibility that the Prophet did in fact present the concept of *shura* to its best advantage and on the scale which circumstances required so that the Muslims under-

stood its nature, but that political motivations led to its suppression so that the Muslims felt forced to hide what the Prophet had already taught them about the rules and details of *shura*. This theory is, however, impracticable because whatever may be claimed about them, these motives could not have influenced the ordinary Muslims from among the *sahaba* who did not participate in the political events which took place immediately after the death of the Prophet, or play an important role in the gathering at as-Saqifa, but were rather on-lookers; for such people represent a large percentage of every society irrespective of the political forces therein.

If the concept of *shura* had been presented by the Prophet according to the requirements of the society this would not have been strictly for the ears of those who had political motives, because many people would have heard about it and it would naturally have been reflected in the actions of the ordinary members of the *sahaba*, just as the prophetical *ahadith* concerning the merits of Imam Ali and his designations were actually reflected in the attitude of the *sahaba* themselves. Also why did these political motives not prevent the *ahadith* concerning the merits of Imam Ali, his designation and his rights to the leadership from being handed down to us through the *sahaba* of the Prophet, in spite of the fact that these contradicted the prevalent attitudes of the time, when we possess no reports concerning the concept of *shura*? In fact even those who represented these prevalent attitudes often found themselves in disagreement concerning political affairs, and would have found it advantageous to uphold the idea of a *shura* in opposition to the other faction. Yet none of these factions used this idea as a precept which they had heard from the Prophet.

An example of this can be found in the position adopted by Talha concerning Abu Bakr's appointment of Umar, and in his denial of and obvious anger against this appointment, because, in spite of his rejection, he did not seek to countermand this appointment by calling for a *shura*, or to condemn Abu Bakr for departing from the teachings of the Prophet concerning *shura*

and the election of a successor.

2. It is also clear that had the Prophet decided to entrust the first generation of Muslims, which included the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* who were his contemporaries, with the guarding of Islam after his death and with the responsibility for the continuation of the task of transformation, he would have been obliged to prepare this generation with an extensive ideological and intellectual project so that they could grasp the concept firmly and practice it according to their awareness thereof, and could find solutions to the problems with which Islam would be continually confronted. This is specially true when we consider that the Prophet, who foretold the fall of Khusrow and Caesar, knew that Islam was destined to win many victories, and that the Islamic *Ummah* would, in the near future, include new nations and cover a large area and would thus face the responsibility of proselytizing Islam to these nations and protecting the *Ummah* from the negative consequences of such expansion, while also applying the legal rules upon the conquered lands and their inhabitants.

In spite of the fact that the first generation of Muslims was the purest ever to embrace Islam and the most prepared to sacrifice for it, we cannot detect any indication of the specialized preparation required to assume the guardianship of the faith, nor of wide and profound instructions concerning its exact nature. In fact the factors which illustrate this point are so numerous that it is impossible to study them in this particular work.

We can, however, point out in relation to this that the number of texts which are reported from the Prophet by the *sahaba* in the sphere of legislation only amounts to a few hundred *ahadith*, while there were about 12,000 *sahaba* according to the history books. Furthermore, the Prophet lived in a town with thousands of them and prayed with them in the same *masjid* morning and evening, so why can we not find some indication of specialized preparation amongst these people?

It is well-known that the *sahaba* refrained from asking the Prophet questions to the extent that all of them would wait until a bedouin came from outside Medina to ask a question and then listen to the Prophet's reply, because they considered a question unnecessary if it concerned something that had not yet taken place.

For this reason Umar once announced from the *minbar*: 'By Allah, man is forbidden to ask questions concerning what has never existed, for indeed the Prophet clarified what is in existence.'[10] And he added: 'It is not permissible for one to ask questions about what has never existed, for Allah has given His judgement upon all things that exist.' Also a man came to Umar's son one day and asked him about something and Umar's son told him: 'Do not ask about what has never existed for I have heard Umar cursing one who asks regarding what has never happened.'[11] There was also a man who asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b about a problem and he said: 'O my son, does this affair which you asked me about exist?' He replied: 'No.' So the former said: 'If that is the case, leave this question until it does exist.'[12]

One day Umar was reading the Qur'an and came to the *ayah*: 'And We caused to grow therein seeds, vines, herbs, olive trees, palms and gardens (which were) profuse, fruitful and verdant (*abban*).'[13] So someone said: 'We know all of this, but what is *abban*?' Then Umar said: 'This, in the Name of Allah, is an irrelevant question, and it is not important whether you know the meaning of *abban* or not. Follow what is clear in the Book and practise it, and leave what you do not know to Allah.'

We can thus discern that the *sahaba* tended to desist from questions other than those concerning clearly defined and existent problems. It was in fact this tendency that led to the

[10] *Sunan ad-Darimi*, 1/50.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Surat al-'Abasa, 28-32.

scarcity of legislative texts reported on the authority of the Prophet and later necessitated the consultation of sources other than the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, such as legal discretion (*istihsan*) and analogy (*qiyas*), and the other features of independent judgement (*ijtihad*) which combine to form the personal interpretation of the *mujtahid*, which can allow the man's personality, his tastes and his personal understanding to enter into the legislative act.

Such a tendency is, of course, diametrically opposed to the process of personal and ideological preparation which would have required the extensive education of this generation, while also requiring that they be acquainted with the legal stipulations concerning the problems which they would face when involved in the leadership.

Just as the *sahaba* refrained from asking questions to the Prophet they also chose not to record his *ahadith* in writing, in spite of the fact that the *ahadith* constituted the second Islamic source and that this was the only way to preserve it and prevent distortion. Indeed, Al-Hirawi expressed openly his disparagement of the oral tradition on the authority of Yahya ibn Sa'id from 'Abd Allah ibn ad-Dinar, saying that neither the *sahaba* nor the next generation wrote down the *ahadith* but transmitted them orally and learnt them by heart, except for the book about the alms tax (*kitab as-sadaqat*). In fact, according to the *Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd, the second *khalifah* thought regarding the best position to adopt concerning the *Sunnah* of the Prophet for a whole month, but finally announced his prohibition of the documentation thereof. Thus the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, which was the most important Islamic source after *Al-Qur'an al-Karim*, was destined to suffer arbitrarily from forgetfulness, distortion and the death of those who had learnt the traditions by heart (*huffaz*) for nearly 150 years.

The only exceptions to this were the *Ahl al-Bayt* who applied themselves to the documented recording of *ahadith* from the earliest period, and we know from the numerous *ahadith*

reported on the authority of the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* that they possess a weighty book which had been dictated by the Prophet of Allah and written by the hand of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and which included all the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Allah.

Do you, by Allah, believe that this naive group of people — if they were in fact naive — who refrained from asking questions about matters which had not yet occurred and forbade the documentation of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet after he had pronounced it were capable of guiding the new religion or of leading it through the most important and difficult stages of its long history? Or do you, by Allah, believe that the Prophet left his *Sunnah* to posterity without ensuring its organization and documentation, although he had commanded his followers to practice it? Furthermore, had he really arranged for the concept of a *shura*, would it not have been necessary to delineate its rules and to organize his *Sunnah*, so that the *shura* could progress according to a definite programme in which personal desires would have no part to play? Or is it that the only rational interpretation of this is that the Prophet had prepared Imam Ali to assume the leadership after his death and entrusted him with his complete *Sunnah* and taught him 1,000 types of knowledge?

In fact, the events which took place after the death of the Prophet proved that the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* had not received any sort of instruction concerning many of the momentous problems which the *da'wah* had to face after the time of the Prophet so that neither the *khalifah* nor the central government who supported him had a clear idea as to how the lands won by the Islamic conquests should be dealt with according to the *Shari'ah*, whether these lands should be divided amongst the fighting forces or should be regarded as endowments (*auqaf*) for the good of all Muslims. For it is surely inconceivable that the Prophet assured the Muslims that they would conquer the lands of Khusrow and Caesar and intended that the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* should lead the *da'wah* and handle the problems arising from these victories when he did not acquaint them with the legal premises which were necessary

to control the large proportion of the world which was to come under Islamic rule.

Indeed we can go even further and illustrate that the generation which was contemporary to the Prophet did not even possess a clearly defined picture of the religious matters which the Prophet had practised hundreds of times within the sight and hearing of the *sahaba*.

A good example of this is the case of the prayers said over a dead man (*salat al-mayyit*), a practice which the Prophet had carried out publicly on hundreds of occasions, performing it as one of the funeral cortege with the funeral escort and those who offered up prayers. Yet in spite of this, it appears that the *sahaba* did not consider it necessary to note the form of this rite carefully as long as the Prophet led the prayer, while they followed him step by step. Because of this they fell into disagreement after the death of the Prophet as to the number of *takbir* (to say *Allahu Akbar*) repeated in the *salat al-mayyit*. At-Tahawi reported from Isma'il saying:

'When the Prophet of Allah died, the people differed as to how many *takbir* should be said over the bier. One man would say, 'I heard the Prophet of Allah say *Allahu Akbar* seven times." While another said, "I heard the Prophet of Allah say *Allahu Akbar* five times" and a third would say, "I heard the Prophet of Allah say *Allahu Akbar* four times." So they differed openly until the death of Abu Bakr and when Umar became *khalifah* and perceived their disagreement he became grieved and sent for one of the *sahaba* of the Prophet of Allah, and said, "You are the *sahaba* of the Prophet of Allah! When you differ before the people they shall differ after you, and when you agree upon a matter the people shall agree upon it. So consider what you shall agree upon." And it was as if he had awakened them. So they replied, "It shall be as you wish, O Leader of the Faithful.'[14]

Thus we can see that the *sahaba* depended on the Prophet

[14] *'Umdatul Qari'*.

during his lifetime and did not feel that it was immediately necessary to study the rules and concepts closely as long as they were under his protection.

You may think that the picture which has been painted of the *sahaba* and of the points which illustrate their inability to rule contradict our belief that the prophetical programme of instruction achieved a high level of success and produced an awesome and religious generation. In reply to this we must point out that in studying the actual nature of the medial generation who were the Prophet's contemporaries we have not mentioned anything which would clash violently with the positive appraisal of the prophetical instructions which he applied during his noble life. Because, while we believe that the prophetical instructions were a unique and divine example and an outstanding religious revelation in the history of prophetical acts, we have found that the belief in this and the attainment of a fair appraisal of the outcome of these instructions does not depend upon the observation of results without reference to the circumstances which surrounded these instructions, nor upon observations of quantity separated from those of quality. In order to clarify this we shall cite the following example.

We shall assume that there is a teacher who is teaching a number of students the English language and literature, and that we want to assess his teaching potential. It is not sufficient simply to scrutinize the students' standard of cultural knowledge or their familiarity with the English language and its literature. We must also take into consideration the time for which the teacher has been teaching these students, their previous experience, their proximity to or distance from the atmosphere of the English language and literature, the size of the difficulties and exceptional problems which confront the teaching process and hinder its natural course, the targets which the teacher aspired to when teaching the literature of this language to his students, and the final outcome of the teaching process when compared to many other types of instruction.

And when assessing the prophetical instructions we must take into consideration the following points:

1) The short length of time in which the Prophet was actually carrying out this plan of instruction, which did not exceed two decades, as far as his earliest *sahaba*, who accompanied him at the beginning of his mission were concerned, and did not exceed a single decade for the vast majority of the *Ansar*, or three or four years for the large number of converts to Islam from the time of the Truce of al-Hudaybiyya until the Conquest of Makkah.

2) The previous intellectual spiritual, religious and behavioural environment in which these people lived before the Prophet started his mission, and the empty simplicity and aimlessness which confronted them in various spheres of their lives. I do not think it necessary to illustrate this point further because it is self-evident. Islam was not a superficial, reformatory process in society, but was rather a radical and revolutionary process aimed at the building of a new society, which implied a total conceptual change in attitudes between the previous and new environment, to which the Prophet directed all his efforts.

3) The events and political and military confrontations which bedevilled that era on various different fronts and made the relationship between the Prophet and his *sahaba* distinct from that of a person like Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) and his disciples, for this relationship was not one of a teacher or instructor who could devote his time totally to his students, but was in fact that of a Prophet who was an instructor while also the military leader and head of State.

4) The social and religious conflict which arose from close contact with the Ahl al-Kitab (the People of the Book), and with various different religious cultures, for this contact and the opposition raised by those who opposed the new faith and were educated according to older religious culture proved a source of unrest and continual provocation. Indeed every one of us knows

that this resulted in the Jewish intellectual trend which was infiltrated accidentally or purposely into the sphere of speculation, and a close scrutiny of *Al-Qur'an al-Karim* is enough to illustrate the extent of the danger posed by the counter-revolution and the extensive involvement of revelation in observing it and disputing its concepts.

5) The fact that the target which the Great Teacher was trying to attain generally was, at this stage, the creation of a sound, popular framework which would make it possible for the leadership of the new message to interact with the *Ummah* and be closely involved in its experiences, both during and after the lifetime of the Prophet. But the target was not, at this stage, the elevation of the *Ummah* to the level of leadership itself, as this required complete understanding of Islam, comprehensive knowledge of its rules and total awareness of its concepts. The limitation of his target at this stage to the level which we have mentioned was logical, because the nature of the process of change dictated it. For it would have been illogical to conceive this target other than within the bounds of possibility or within the limitations which we have mentioned, considering the circumstances faced by Islam at this time, and the ideological, spiritual, intellectual and social differences between the new religion and the prevalent corrupt reality of the era, which would have made it impossible for the people to raise themselves to the leadership of this religion after only one or two decades. This point shall be examined further in the next paragraph, in which we shall give proofs of the continued responsibility involved as regards the new revolutionary experiment, which was illustrated in the leadership of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, so that the *khilafah* of Imam Ali was actually dictated by the logical process of change throughout the history of Islam.

6) The fact that a great many of the *Ummah* which was left by the Prophet were *Muslimat al-Fath*, that is Muslims who converted to Islam after the Conquest of Makkah and after the new religion had become the most powerful political and

military force in the Arabian Peninsula. Naturally, the Prophet was only destined to limited contact with them in the short time left to him after the Conquest, and most of this contact was in his capacity as ruler. Because of the stage through which the Islamic State was passing the concept of *Mu'allifa Qulubuhum* appeared, and in order to win over the hearts of people they were given the right to receive *zakat* and other measures. Clearly this section of the *Ummah* was not separated from the other, but was an integral part thereof, influencing and being influenced at the same time.

Thus, in the study of these six points, we have discovered that the prophetical instructions were actually extremely successful and brought about a singular transformation within the society, while also producing a virtuous generation who were capable of realizing the Prophet's aim as regards the creation of a sound, popular foundation who could rally around the guiding leadership of the new experience and support it. Because of this we also find that this generation was capable of performing its role as the sound, popular foundation as long as mature and guiding leadership was present in the person of the Prophet. Had this leadership been allowed to take its divine course, this foundation would have continued to play its correct part, although this does not mean that it was actually ready to assume this leadership itself, or to guide the new experience, because this would have required greater spiritual and believing cohesion with Islam, and a stronger and more extensive identification with its rules and concepts and with the various aspects of its attitudes toward life, while also necessitating a more intense elimination of the ranks of the *Ummah* which included the *munafiqun*, the *mundisun* (infiltrators) and the *Mu'allifa Qulubuhum*, who were still a numerically and historically important part of this generation, whose negative influences are indicated by the number of verses in *Al-Qur'an al-Karim* in which especially the *munafiqun*, their machinations and their position are mentioned. There were, of course, some individuals from this generation whose high

religious attainments were formed by this instruction, as their personalities fused in its melting pot, like Salman Farsi, Abu Dharr, Ammar and many others.

But I would like to point out that the existence of these individuals as part of this large generation does not prove that this generation had, as whole, attained the level at which the control of this momentous experience could be handed over to them, according to the principle of *shura*. Indeed, even the majority of these individual elites did not possess the religious qualifications which would have made them capable of leading the experience as regards its intellectual and cultural features, in spite of their staunch loyalty and profound devotion, because Islam is not an ideology made by man whose ideas could be defined as a result of practical experience, or whose concepts could be clarified as a result of devoted experimentation. It is rather the message of Allah, whose rules and concepts had been ordained and divinely increased with every piece of legislation necessitated by experience, so the leadership needed to fully comprehend its statutes and details, and study assiduously its rules and concepts, otherwise it would be forced to rely upon previous intellectual ideas and tribal connections, which would lead to a break in the continuity of the experience, especially when we remember that Islam was the last of the religions of the heavens and must continue and surpass all temporal, regional and national laws. It was thus impermissible that the leadership, which would mould the foundations of this eternal religion, should practise a series of mistakes and correct actions, in which the mistakes would be accumulated over a period of time until they formed a fatal flaw which could threaten the Islamic experience with decline and destruction.

Everything that has gone before proves that the instructions given by the Prophet to the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* did not reach the level which would have been necessitated by the conscious, intellectual and political preparation required to guide the future path of the *da'wah* and the process of change

which had been instigated by the Prophet. It was, in fact, restricted to that required for a conscious, popular foundation which could rally to the leadership of the *da'wah*, both in the present and the future.

Each assumption which points to the belief that the Prophet intended that the support of the future experience and guardianship of the *da'wah* immediately after his death should be vested in the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* implicitly involves an idictment against the greatest and most discerning religious leader in the history of reformatory movements, because there was no clear distinction between the understanding necessary for the popular foundation of the *da'wah* and that necessary for the guidance of the *da'wah* or its intellectual and political leadership.

3. The *da'wah* was, of course, a reformatory process and a framework for a new way of life, charged with the task of building a new community and with uprooting all *jahili* principles and all their foundations.

The Islamic *Ummah* did not, as a whole, live in the shadow of this reformatory process for more than a single decade at the most, which is not usually long enough, according to the logic of ideological religions and reformatory beliefs, to raise a generation to the level of awareness and objectivity and freedom from the residue of past ideas, at which they can grasp the ideas of the new *da'wah*, and be capable of assuming the guardianship of the message, and handling the problems of this *da'wah*, while also continuing its reformatory process without a leader. In fact the logic of ideological religions makes it inevitable that the *Ummah* should continue under ideological trusteeship for a longer period of time, in which it could be raised to the level of guardianship itself.

This is not something which we have simply inferred, as it was also a fact substantiated by the events which took place after the death of the Prophet and became clear after half a century or less in the attempts of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* to lead and

guard the *da'wah*. For, after less than a quarter of a century of this 'guardianship,' the *khilafah* of this generation and the religious experience resulting from its leadership were destroyed under the force of the heavy attacks made upon it by the former enemies of Islam, but this time from within rather than from without the Islamic experience. These enemies were able to infiltrate by degrees the weak points of this experience and take advantage of the inattentive leadership. Then they usurped this leadership insolently and violently and forced the *Ummah* and its original, pioneering generation to renounce its identity and its leadership, while the leadership itself turned into a line of hereditary kings, infatuated with prestige, who murdered the innocent, squandered wealth, neglected the rules of Islam, caused its laws to ossify, and fraudulently used the resources of the people. Thus the lands conquered by the Muslims became the gardens of Quraysh and the *khilafah* a toy of Banu Umayya.

So the true facts of the experience after the death of the Prophet and the results of this quarter century support the previous inference, which emphasized the support for guidance, and the intellectual and political leadership of the *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* immediately after the death of the Prophet was a premature step which was taken before its natural time. It is, however, illogical that the Prophet should have taken a step of this kind.

The Third Path

The third path is the only remaining possibility which is consistent with the nature of the facts and logical in light of the circumstances surrounding the *da'wah* and the faithful, and the attitude of the Prophet, namely that the Prophet adopted a positive stance towards the future of Islam after his death and at the orders of Allah, May He be Praised and Exalted, chose someone whose deep involvement in the formation of the *da'wah* made him an obvious nominee, and specifically prepared him religiously and in the art of leadership so that he could exemplify the intellectual authority and political leadership of the experience, and maintain the leadership of the *Ummah* and

its ideological structure after the Prophet's death, with the support of the conscious, popular foundation of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, and strengthen it towards the level at which it could handle the problems of leadership.

This, we find, is the only way in which the Prophet could ensure the future security of the *da'wah* and protect the experience from deviation in the course of its development. And thus it was.

There are not any signs in the texts which have been transmitted on the authority of the Prophet to prove that he privately prepared any of the other Muslims religiously, culturally or ideologically so as to qualify them to assume either intellectual or political authority. Nor is there any proof therein that he entrusted any of the other Muslims with the future of the *da'wah* and with the intellectual and political leadership of the *Ummah* after his death. But these facts only serve to explicate the Prophet's attitude towards the third possiblity facing him, and to prove that the nature of the affair was in fact as we have surmised.

The person designated to receive this training in the religion and leadership and chosen as the one to whom the future of the *da'wah* and its intellectual and political leadership would be surrendered was none other than Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, whose deep involvement in the formation of the *da'wah* made him an obvious nominee. He was the first Muslim and the first to fight in the path of Islam (*mujahid*) during its bitter battle against all its enemies, and was deeply involved in the life of the Prophet, and was his foster-son whose eyes opened on the Prophet's lap and who grew up under his protection, and who had more opportunity to collaborate with him and take part in his plans than any other man alive.

In fact the evidence from the lives of the Prophet and the Imam which indicate that the Prophet prepared the Imam specially in religious matters is indeed substantial. For the Prophet chose to explain the concept of *da'wah* and its truths to him, and gave

him intellectual answers and sought to cultivate the Imam's awareness when he asked numerous questions while also spending long hours with him during both the night and the day, opening his eyes to the concepts of Islam and to the problems to be faced during its progress, and to the management of the task until the last day of his noble life.

Al-Hakim reports in *Al-Mustadrak* on the authority of Ibn Ishaq: 'I asked Al-Qasim ibn al-Abbas, "How did Ali become the heir of the Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Because he was the first among us to embrace Islam and the most faithful in his adherence thereto".'

And in the *Hulyat al-Awliya* it is reported from Ibn Abbas that he said: 'We used to say that the Prophet entrusted Ali with 70 pledges which he did not entrust to anyone else.'

Also An-Nisa'i reported on the authority of Ibn Abbas that Ali used to say: 'I had a privileged relationship with the Messenger of Allah which was not granted to any other mortal, as I used to visit the Prophet of Allah every night. If he was praying I would wait until he said the *tasbih* and then enter, and if he wasn't praying he would permit me and I would enter.'

It is also related from the Imam that he said: 'I had two meetings with the Prophet — the night meeting and the day meeting.'

While An-Nisa'i also relates that the Imam used to say: 'Whenever I asked the Messenger of Allah a question he replied and when I was silent he would speak to me.' Al-Hakim also relates this in *Al-Mustadrak* and says that it is sound according to the two shaikhs (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

An-Nisa'i relates from Umm Salama that she used to say: 'By the One by Whom Umm Salama swears, the closest person to the Messenger of Allah at his death was Ali. On the morning that the Messenger of Allah died the Messenger of Allah sent for Ali, and I thought that he had been sent on an errand because

the Prophet said, "Has Ali come?" three times. He came before sunrise, and when he came we recognized that the Prophet wished to talk with him. So we left the house (we were at that time with the Messenger of Allah in 'Aisha's house), and as I was the last to leave the house, I sat just outside the door and was closest to it. And Ali leant over him and was the last person to converse with him as the Prophet whispered and talked with him.'

Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Faithful) Imam Ali in his famous rigorous speech, in which he described his unique relationship with the Messenger and the Prophet's care regarding his training and education, said:

'You know of my connection with the Messenger of Allah, my close kinship to him and my intimate position. He put me on his lap when I was a child, hugged me to his breast, embraced me in his bed, so that his body touched mine and so I smelled his scent, and would also chew things and then give them to me to eat. But he did not find me lying in my speech or pompous in my act. I used to follow him as the small camel follows its mother and every day he showed me part of his moral acts and ordered me to do likewise. Every year he used to take me to Hira and only I could see him, for at that period of time of Islam there was only the Messenger of Allah, Khadijah and myself as the third, as nobody else lived in the house. So I saw the light of revelation and the message and smelled the fragrance of prophecy.'

These testimonies and plenty of other evidence gives us a picture of the training which the Prophet gave to Imam Ali in order to raise him to the level at which he coud lead the *da'wah* successfully. Similarly, there are a great many indications from the lifetime of Imam Ali after the death of the Prophet which reveal the Prophet's private ideological training of Imam Ali and reflect the effects and results of this private instruction. The Imam was the man to whom the ruling leadership resorted for consultation and authority when they wished to solve some

difficult problem which they could not solve themselves. But we cannot find a single instance in the history of the Islamic experience during the time of the four *khulafah* in which the Imam turned to someone else for an opinion as to the way in which a problem should be dealt with according to Islam, whereas there were tens of instances in which the ruling Islamic leadership felt it necessary to consult the Imam, in spite of their reservations in this matter.

If the evidence for the claim that the Prophet prepared the Imam privately to assume the leadership of the *da'wah* after his death are numerous, those which prove that the Prophet revealed this plan and officially entrusted the intellectual and political leadership of the *da'wah* to Imam Ali are hardly less numerous; a fact which we can discern from the *Hadith al-Dar; Hadith ath-Thaqalayn, Hadith al-Manzila, Hadith al-Ghadir* and from many other prophetical texts.

So Shi'ism was established within the Islamic *da'wah* and was exemplified in the prophetical presentation thereof, which was implemented by the Prophet at the orders of Allah so that the future safety of the *da'wah* could be ensured.

This Shi'ism did not appear as a superficial phenomenon in the theatre of events, but was rather a necessary result of the needs and original circumstances of the *da'wah*, which made it necessary for Islam to produce Shi'ism. In other words, it was incumbent upon the first leader of the experience to instruct a second leader under whose leadership, and under that of his successors, the experience could continue its revolutionary development, and attain the total success of its radical reformatory aims by eliminating all the remains of the fundamental ideas of *jahiliyyah* and establishing an *Ummah* which had reached the level necessary to handle the tasks and problems faced by the *da'wah*.

How the Shi'a came into existence

We now know how Shi'ism came into existence, but how did the

Shi'a emerge and how did the schism of the *Ummah* develop from this? This is a question which we shall now answer.

When we follow the first stage of the life of the Muslim *Ummah* during the lifetime of the Prophet we find that there were two different principal trends accompanying the development of the *Ummah* and the beginning of the Islamic experience from the earliest years, which co-existed within the embryonic *Ummah* established by the guiding Prophet. This difference between the two trends led to an ideological schism immediately after the death of the Prophet which divided the *Ummah* into two sections, one of which was destined to rule and extend its influence so as to include the majority of the Muslims, while the other section was forced further from power and was destined to exist as an opposing minority within the framework of the greater Muslim *Ummah*. This minority was in fact the Shi'a.

The two principal trends which accompanied the development of the *Ummah* during the lifetime of the Prophet from the beginning were:

i) The trend which believed in devotion to Islam and its arbitration, and in total submission to the religious texts in every sphere of life.

ii) The trend which believed that belief in Islam did not necessitate devotion except in the special scope of religious observances and metaphysics, and believed in the possibility of *ijtihad* (independent judgement), and the permissibility of making judgements on this basis with changes and modifications in the religious texts according to their interests in matters other than the above in the sphere of life.

Although the *sahaba*, as the believing and enlightened vanguard of Islam, were the most perfect and most important seeds for its religious development to the extent that there has never in the course of history been an ideological generation more magnificent, purer or more nobler than that established by the Prophet, we find that it is necessary to accept the existence of a

large trend, from the very lifetime of the Prophet who inclined towards proposing the use of *ijtihad* and circumstantial considerations in determining their interests, above strict adherence to the religious texts. Similarly, there was another trend which believed in religious arbitration and in submission and devotion thereto concerning all religious texts and all areas of life.

One of the factors contributing to the spread of the second trend (*al-ijtihad*) amongst the Muslim ranks was its coherence with man's natural tendency towards making judgements and according to its interests, as he understands them, rather than according to a decision whose significance he does not understand.

This trend was represented by a daring group of important *sahaba* like, Umar ibn al-Khattab, who disputed with the Messenger and made judgements contradicting the texts in many subjects, believing that they had the right to do so. In this respect we can cite Umar's attitude towards the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya and his objection thereto, his attitude towards the *adhan* (call to prayer) and his decision to exclude, '*Hayy 'ala khayr al-'amal*,' his attitude towards the Prophet regarding the *Muta'a 'l-Hajj*, and other examples of his attitude towards the use of *ijtihad*.

Both these trends were reflected in the presence of the Messenger during the last days of his life. In his *Sahih*, Al-Bukhari quotes on the authority of Ibn Abbas:

'When the Messenger of Allah was about to die there were men gathered in the house, amongst whom was Umar ibn al-Khattab. The Prophet said, "Come I shall give you a document after which none shall go astray." But Umar said, "The Prophet has been overcome by pain and he has already given us the Qur'an, and the Book of Allah is sufficient for us." Whereupon the people gathered together in the house disagreed, and one of them argued, saying, "Come near! The Prophet is going to give us a document after which none shall go astray." While another said the same as Umar. And when the nonsensical speech and

disagreement became too much for the Prophet he told them, "Depart!""

This incident alone serves to prove the deep-seated attitudes of the two trends, and the extent of the disagreement and struggle between them.

In order to illustrate the deep-seated attitudes of the trend who believed in such judgement, we can add an account of the controversy and disagreement between the *sahaba* which surrounded the appointment of Usama ibn Zayd over the army, in spite of the fact that there was a clear prophetical designation to that effect. This controversy continued until the Messenger of Allah, who was ill, came out to the people and spoke to them saying: 'O people, what is this that I have heard concerning the attitude of some of you to the appointment of Usama? If you oppose the appointment of Usama you should have opposed the appointment of his father before him. I swear by Allah that he was worthy of the appointment and that his son is worthy of it after him!'

The struggle between these two trends, which was visible during the lifetime of the Prophet, was also reflected in the attitude of the Muslims to Imam Ali's designation as leader of the *da'wah* after the death of the Prophet. Those who represented the devotional trend (*Al-Ittijad at-Ta'abbudi*) found it necessary to accept this designation without hesitation or modification, whereas the second trend thought that they could reject this designation of the Prophet when their independent judgement led them to one which was more in keeping with their understanding of the circumstances.

Thus we can see that the Shi'a appeared immediately after the death of the Prophet and was represented by those Muslims who actually accepted his designation of Imam Ali as the leader, whose leadership had been stipulated by the Prophet which should have been realized immediately upon the Prophet's death.

So the Shi'i trend took form in the first instance because of the prevention of Imam Ali's assumption of the leadership at as-Saqifa and the entrusting of the authority to someone else.

In *Al-Ihtijaj* At-Tabarsi says, on the authority of Iban ibn Taghlib:

'I told Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq, peace be upon him, "May I be your ransom. Did any of the *sahaba* of the Messenger of Allah deny the appointment of Abu Bakr?" He said, "Yes. Twelve of the *Muhajirun* denied it: Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn Abi 'l-As, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad, Ammar ibn Yasir, and Barida 'l-Aslami; as did the following *Ansar*: Abu 'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayhan, Uthman ibn Hunayf, Khuzayma ibn Thabit Dhu sh'Shihadatayn, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari".'

You may say that if the Shi'i trend represented close adherence to the text while the other trend represented independent judgement this implies that the Shi'a refuted the concept of *ijtihad* and did not permit themselves to apply it, whereas we know that the Shi'a have always practised the use of *ijtihad* in matters concerning Islamic law (*ash-Shari'ah*).

The answer to this is that the *ijtihad* employed by the Shi'a is the derivation of a ruling from the legal texts, which they believe not only to be permissible, but obligatory for a section of the *Ummah*, not the *ijtihad* which is to reject the legal texts or to subject the legal text to the personal view of the *mujtahid*, or to some resultant benefit, for this is impermissible and the Shi'a trend refutes any such use of *ijtihad*.

When we talk of the development of these two trends from the origins of Islam onwards, one of which followed the texts closely while the other employed *ijtihad*, we mean by *ijtihad* the making of judgements in contradiction to the text or the acceptance of such a judgement. The appearance of these two trends would have been natural in the case of any radical and reformatory religion which attempted to change a corrupt reality from its

very roots upwards, although the extent of their influence would have differed according to the strength of the residue of previous ideas, the extent of the individual's identification with the principles of the new religion, and of his devotion thereto. We of course know that the trend which represented the close adherence to the texts identified with Islam and devoted themselves totally to it; and did not reject the use of *ijtihad* within the framework of the religious texts and in extracting legal rulings from these texts. It is also important that we should point out that this adherence to the texts does not imply ossification and rigidity, which would be incompatible with the problems imposed by progress and by the many different modernizing factors which are part of man's life. As we understand it, adherence to the text is adherence to Islam and the total acceptance thereof, for Islam carries within itself all the flexibility and capacity necessary to adapt to the needs of any particular time and all the elements of modernization and progress included therein. Thus, adherence to Islam and its texts is also adherence to all these elements, and to their capacity for original creation and modernization.

This is a general sketch to explain Shi'ism as a natural phenomenon within the framework of Islam and the appearance of the Shi'a as an answer to this natural phenomenon.

Before ending, I would like to mention a point which I believe to be very important. Some scholars have tried to distinguish between two different aspects of Shi'ism: the first is spiritual Shi'ism and the second is political Shi'ism. Moreover, they believed that spiritual Shi'ism is older than its political counterpart, and that the Imami Imams from the lineage of Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, retired from the political scene after the massacre at Karbala, moved their attention to spiritual guidance and ritual acts, and withdrew from the world.

However, the truth is that Shi'ism has never been solely a purely spiritual trend from its earliest beginnings, and indeed originated

at the very heart of Islam as a movement dedicated to assisting Imam Ali to achieve his rightful position as the sole ideological leader of Islam after the death of the Prophet as we previously explained in our examination of the circumstances which led to the birth of Shi'ism.

It is not in fact possible, in view of the circumstances which we have examined, to divorce the spiritual side from the social in any representation of Shi'ism, just as it is impossible to divorce one from the other in Islam itself. Thus Shi'ism can only be divided when it loses its significance as an attempt to safeguard the future of the *da'wah* after the death of the Prophet, a future which required a combination of both ideological authority and social leadership.

There was a great deal of support for Imam Ali among the Muslim ranks who believed that he was the person capable of maintaining the type of leadership initiated by the three *khulafah*, and it was this which brought him to power after the murder of Uthman. But this mere support is not Shi'ism, neither spiritual nor political, because the Shi'a believe Imam Ali should have ruled instead of these three *khulafah*, and should have assumed the *khilafah* immediately after the Prophet. Thus the wide support for Imam Ali amongst the Muslim ranks extended beyond the scope of true Shi'ism, so that the supposed spiritual and political wings of Shi'ism were actually an element within this greater support, and we can hardly claim this case as an example of divided Shi'ism.

Similarly, the spiritual and ideological support which the Imam enjoyed from some of the important *sahaba* during the reigns of Abu Bakr and Umar (such as Salman, Abu Dharr, Ammar and others) does not indicate a spiritual Shi'ism divorced from its political side. On the contrary, it expresses the fact that these *sahaba* believed ideologically and politically in the rights of Imam Ali to the leadership of the *da'wah* after the death of the Prophet and that their ideological belief in his leadership was reflected in their previous spiritual support, while their political

belief in his leadership was reflected in their opposition to the *khilafah* of Abu Bakr and to the trend which turned the authority from the Imam in favour of another.

In fact, there was never any such division between spiritual Shi'ism and social Shi'ism, and such an idea only presented itself to the Shi'i believer after he succumbed to the reality of the situation, and after the fire of Shi'ism in its limited meaning as a movement towards truly Islamic leadership within the *Ummah* and the accomplishment of the radical, reformatory task undertaken by the Great Messenger had been extinguished in his heart, and had turned into a purely religious belief which the individual bore within his heart, or from which he derived his conduct and aspirations.

We now come to the claim that the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* from the progeny of Imam Husayn withdrew from politics and cut themselves off from the world. In fact it is worth noting that Shi'ism, as we understand it, was a means towards the continuation of truly Islamic leadership. Islamic leaderhip, however, simply means the continuation of the type of leadership initiated by the Noble Messenger towards the total establishment of an *Ummah* on the basis of Islam, and it is thus impossible to imagine a way in which the Imams could have withdrawn from social affairs without withdrawing also from Shi'ism. However, the Imams' decision not to take up arms against the contemporary governments helped to spread the belief that they had in fact abdicated their social interest in the leadership. Yet we possess many texts transmitted on the authority of the Imams which show that each Imam was always ready to undertake military action if he was sure that he had the necessary followers and strength to achieve the Islamic aims.

If we follow the path of the Shi'i movement we find that the Shi'i leadership, which was represented by the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, believed that the achievement of authority was not in itself sufficient for the fulfillment of the Islamic reformatory process, unless this authority was supported by ideological,

popular bases which were aware of the aims of this government, strove to guard it and explain its attitudes to the populace, and stood firm in times of hardship.

In the middle of the first century after the death of the Prophet the Shi'i leadership was still continually trying to regain control of the *Ummah* by means which they believed in, in spite of the distance between them and the government, because they believed that they had strong, popular support from the *Muhajirun, Ansar*, and *Tabi'un* (next generation) who were aware, or semi-aware, of their rights to authority. However, half a century later, after all noticeable signs of this popular support had vanished and new generations had grown up under insidious influences, it became clear that any achievement of this control by the Shi'i movement would not lead to its lofty goal, because the popular support, which would have assisted them and sacrificed themselves for them because of their awareness of their rights to power, no longer existed.

In view of this there were only two possible courses of action: firstly, an attempt to reestablish these conscious popular bases, which could prepare the ground for the eventual achievement of power; and secondly, to shake the consciousness of the Muslim *Ummah*, so as to maintain the life and vigour of the Islamic consciousness and the *Ummah*, and protect the *Ummah* against the total abdication of its identity and nobility to deviant rulers.

The first course of action was actually adopted by the Imams themselves, while the second was adopted by the 'Alid revolutionaries who tried to protect the conscience and free will of the Muslim *Ummah* by their courageous self-sacrifice. Those of the revolutionaries who were sincere enjoyed the support of the Imams.

Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha, peace be upon him, told Al-Ma'mun, when he discussed the martyred Zayd ibn Ali:

'He was one of the scholars (*ulama*) of the *Ahl al-Bayt* who became angry on Allah's behalf and fought His enemies until he

was killed fighting in His path. My father, Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be upon him, told me that he used to hear his father, Ja'far, say, "May Allah have mercy on my Uncle Zayd, who encouraged the people to support the most suitable leader from the *Al-Muhammad*. For had he been victorious, he would have fulfilled his promise to Allah, because he used to say, 'I am calling you to support the most suitable leader from the family of Muhammad'."

Thus the fact that the Imams abandoned the idea of direct military action against deviant rulers does not mean that they set aside the political aspect of their leadership and turned all their attention to prayers only. On the contrary, it demonstrates how their different forms of political policy were shaped by contemporary circumstances and by their profound awareness of the exact nature of their radical policy and of the best means to its fulfillment.

And Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

About the Author

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In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Chapter 2

Wilaya of Imam Ali and its Theological-Juridical Implications for the Islamic Political Thought

By Abdulaziz A Sachedina

This paper examines the Qur'anic origins of the concept of *wilaya* in light of its connection with the historical *wilaya* of Imam Ali. Various explanations of the concept in the Qur'anic exegesis, written by different schools of thought in Islam, have been studied to investigate the theological importance of *wilaya* to the fundamental doctrine of the leadership (*imama*) in Islam. The close relationship between the doctrines of divine justice (*al-'Adl*) and the necessity of the divinely-appointed *imam* in the Shi'i school of thought underscore the pivotal status of the acceptance of the *wilaya* of Imam Ali as imperative to the faith of believers. At the same time, recognition of this *wilaya* of Imam Ali is regarded as a precondition to the establishment of the ideal public order based on the divine scale of justice. Consequently, no ideal public order is conceivable in Islam without the *imama* being invested in the person in whom this *wilaya* is validated through a divine designation. This theological relationship between the *imama* and *wilaya* through divine designation made it juridically problematic for anyone other than the divinely appointed Imam to assume the absolute *wilaya* in the Muslim *Ummah*. This problem of assuming the *wilaya* by other than the Imam himself was duly treated in the Shi'i jurisprudence, which carefully defined the limits of juridical

wilaya in relation to the theological *wilaya* of the Imam. The paper, thus, demonstrates the significance of the *wilaya* of Imam Ali in the Qur'anic context of establishing the public order and the necessity of accepting the interdependency between *imama* and *waliya* in Islamic leadership while differentiating between theological and juridical forms of *wilaya*.

Introduction

'When he (the Prophet) had completed its (Hajj) ceremonies, he left for Medina accompanied by the multitudes previously mentioned. He arrived at the pool of Khum (Ghadir Khum) in al-Juhfa, where the roads of the people of Medina, the people of Egypt and the people of Iraq cross. That was on Thursday, Dhil-Hijjah 18 [when] Jibreel (Gabriel), the faithful, brought down Allah's revelation saying: "O Messenger! Deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord" (5:67). And he commanded him to point out Ali to the people and proclaim to them the revelation concerning him about the *wilaya* and the obligation of obedience upon everyone. Those of the people who were in front were near al-Juhfa. The Prophet of Allah commanded that those who advanced should be halted at that place. He forbade them to sit down under five gum acacia trees (*sumurat*) which were close to each other. When the summons to prayer was given for the noon prayers, he went towards them (the trees) and prayed at the head of the people under them... When he had completed his prayers, he stood delivering a speech in the middle of the people, on the saddles of the camels. He made them all hear, raising his voice, saying:

"...O people, the Kind, the Knower, informed me that a Prophet has not lived but half the age of his predecessor and that I am about to be recalled and I responded. I am to be interrogated and you are to be interrogated. What will you say?" The people said, "We bear witness that you have proclaimed the message and that you have given the advice and that you have made the endeavour, may Allah reward you!" He said, "Would you not bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad

is His Servant and His Messenger; that His Garden is true; that His Fire is true; that death is true; that the hour comes of which there is no doubt; and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves?" They said, "Yes. We bear witness to that." Then he said, "O Allah, bear witness [to that]," [and he continued], "O people! Do you hear?" They said, "Yes." He said, "I am preceding you to the Pond (*al-Hawd*) and you will rejoin me at the Pond...See to it how you will look after the Two Treasures (*ath-Thaqalayn*) after me." A caller called out, "What are the Two Treasures, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "The Bigger Treasure (*ath-Thaqlu'l-Akbar*) is the Book of Allah, one end of it is in the Hand of Allah and one end is in your hands. If you adhere to it you will not go astray. The Smaller Treasure (*ath-Thaqlu'l-Asghar*) is my Family (*'Itrati*). The Kind, the Knower, informed me that they will not separate until they rejoin me at the Pond. I wished that from Allah for them. Do not precede them so that you may not perish. Do not fail to reach them so that you may not succumb." Then he held the hand of Ali and raised it until the white of the armpit could be seen and all the people recognized him. He said, "O people, who is more worthy (*'awla*) [in the eyes of] the believers than their ownselves?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know better." He said, "Allah is my Master and I am the master of the believers and I am worthier in their eyes than their ownselves. Whoever has me for his master has Ali for his master." He said it thrice, and according to Ahmad, the *imam* of the Hanbalis, four times."[1]

The above proclamation at Ghadir Khum regarding the *wilaya* of Imam Ali occurred in the last year of the Prophet's life (10 AH/632 AD). Fourteen centuries have passed since then, and looking at the number of books and studies written on the subject of *wilaya*, both by the proponents as well as opponents, the proclamation at Ghadir Khum proved to be one of the most pivotal events for the determination of the direction of the political-religious history of Islam. Questions about the

[1]'Abd al-Husayn Ahmad al-Amini al-Najafi, *Al-Ghadir fi al-Kitab wa al-Sunna wa al-Adab*, Vol I, Beirut, 1967, p 9-11, and all the Sunni and Shi'i sources cited therein.

historicity of that event, whether raised by the Sunni scholars or by their western counterparts, who, more than often, followed the Sunni sources in their conclusions about the early history of Islam, have overlooked the political-religious implications of Ghadir Khum on the subsequent conceptualization of Islamic leadership (*imama*) among Muslims in general. The event at al-Juhfa, moreover, unfolded the Qur'anic presupposition in the matter of the direction that human society must follow in order to attain the final goal for which it has been created. On studying the Qur'an in its entirety the following general view emerges about human society which directly affects the question of leadership (*imama*) of that society.

To begin with, the Qur'an states more than once that Islam is not a new religion but the culmination of Allah's spiritual and temporal commands made known throughout human history through the mediatorship of divinely appointed prophets like Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and the other prophets, the last in that line being Muhammad, peace be upon him. Thus, the Prophet is the bearer of divine revelation that puts forth the divine commands for the guidance of humanity. This guidance lays the foundation of human social organization by providing a set of laws and rules by which the believers manage their affairs and through which their public order is governed or should govern itself. Accordingly, the divine guidance forms the basis for relations between man and Allah, on the one hand, and, between all people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, as well as between man and all aspects of the creation, on the other. Furthermore, the divine guidance also contains rational principles which should help human intellect to infer detailed rules to organize the Muslim society and proffer the means to resolve conflicts between individuals and between individuals and the public order which has taken upon itself to implement the essential elements of the divine directives.

It is relevant to point out that unlike any other legal-political-social system, Islamic revelation clearly points toward an

integrated concept of life based on the intricate relationship between this world and the hereafter. It regulates the conduct of the public order and of the individual in all aspects of human concern, linking the mundane and transcendental concerns in an inseparable whole. In this linkage, the will of Allah is decisive in guiding the inter-relationship of humans, and of man and his Creator.[2] The Qur'an regards the knowledge of the All-Knowing and All-Powerful Creator *a priori* through the precise creation of the innate disposition (*fitra*) in humanity, which, if it heeds to the call of the divine guidance, would attain 'prosperity' (*al-falah*).

These preliminary considerations about the Qur'anic view of divine guidance explain the inter-relationship of the Islamic norms provided in the *Shari'ah*, that divine scale of justice and equity, and the leader (*imam*) who exercises the divinely invested authority in him to lead the Muslim community to the prescribed goal of creating an ethical order on earth. The *Shari'ah* norms and the divinely appointed leadership fulfill humanity's need for the authoritative guidance based upon spiritual values giving man the existential meaning of his position in the universal context of Islamic revelation. The interdependency between the divine norms and the divinely appointed authority to attain the Qur'anic prosperity rejects the notion of separation between temporal and spiritual spheres of human activity. Moreover, the connection between divine guidance and the creation of the Islamic world order, as a consequence, marked the inevitable interdependency between the religious and the political in Islam.

The entire question of *wilaya* and its ramifications for the qualified leadership (*imama*) to further the divine plan and to enable Allah's religion to succeed must be seen from the perspective of the Islamic promise of the creation of an ethically just order on earth. More importantly, the belief in the *wilaya* of

[2]This is the meaning of the word the Qur'an applies so often to indicate the divine purpose in endowing humanity with guidance, namely, *al-falah*. Usually translated as 'prosperity,' *falah* signifies the good of both this and the next world for those who have responded to the divine guidance.

Imam Ali gave rise to the group of dedicated individuals among the associates of the Prophet who formed the nucleus of the early *Shi'a*. These early followers of Imam Ali represented the growth of discontent among the Muslims who refused to acknowledge and regard as legitimate the rule of those whom they considered usurpers of a position of leadership that rightfully belonged to Ali ibn Ali Talib and his descendants. The period also caused the predicament of the Muslim community precipitated by the Muslim political power under the *khilafah* which led to revolutions and rebellions as well as to discussions and deliberations. This is depicted in the early Islamic *fiqh* (theology *cum* jurisprudence)[3] literature that emerged toward the end of the second/eighth century. Early *fiqh* wove together the various threads of Islamic legal practice with the doctrinal underpinnings of early Muslim groupings. Consequently, the juridical opinions in the early *fiqh* works were formulated by taking into consideration whether certain legal or political injunctions affected the legitimacy of one or the other leader among the associates of the Prophet favoured by each faction. In other words, the legitimacy of a leader allowed him to be used as a valid legal-religious precedent required to establish the authoritativeness of Islamic practices. Thus, even when a particular ruling went against explicitly textual evidence provided by the Qur'an, the overriding consideration for the early Muslim scholars was the preservation and legitimation of the authority in power, a consideration that came to be justified under the rubric of *al-masalih al-'amma* (the general welfare of the Muslim community).

The most important issue throughout Shi'i history has been

[3] *Fiqh* in its early usage was not limited to legal jurisprudence. It dealt with doctrinal and credal matters connected with basic Islamic beliefs, including the subject of Muslim authority after the Prophet's death. This early trend in *fiqh* writing continued much later as is evidenced in many works of *fiqh* that were written in the sixth/twelfth-thirteenth century which began with a prologue on the main tenets of Islam. See article, *Fiqh* in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition; also Introduction to my work: *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

access to the right guidance as an important consequence of the acknowledgement of the *wilaya* of Imam Ali. For the Shi'as, the right guidance had continuously been available to the *Ummah* even though the Imams, except for the short period of Imams Ali and Hasan's *khilafah*, were not invested with political authority and were living under the political power exercised by the *de facto* governments. The possession of the *wilaya* (notwithstanding the Imam's lack of political power, he still had the right to demand obedience from his followers) was clearly seen in the Imam's ability to provide religious leadership by interpreting divine revelation authoritatively. What was decided by him through interpretation and elaboration was binding on the believers.

The interpretation of the divine revelation by the Imam, only because of his position as the *wali* of Allah, was regarded as the right guidance needed by the people at all times. It was, moreover, the divine guidance that theologically justified the superstructures erected on the two doctrines of Imami Shi'ism: the justice of Allah and the designation of the Imam, free from error and sinful deviations, in order to make Allah's will known to humanity. The belief in divine justice demanded that Allah do what was best for humanity; and the belief in divine truthfulness generated the confidence that Allah's promise would be fulfilled. The proof that Allah was doing what had been promised was provided by the divinely created institutions of the prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and the *imamate* (through the *wilaya*) to guide humanity toward the creation of an ideal public order. In response to the dilemma created by the end of the manifest leadership of the Imams through the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, and the continued need of the community to their guidance, the Shi'i leaders expounded the theological and legal content of the Islamic revelation through meticulous study of the Qur'an and elaborated upon the teachings of the Imams, in which a prominent place was given to the faculty of reasoning (*al-'Aql*).

The importance of reason in the exposition of the fundamental tenets of Islam was in accord with the Imami Shi'i rational theology, in which reason was prior to both sources of revelation, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. This does not mean that the revelation was not regarded as all-comprehensive. However, it was reason that acknowledged the comprehensiveness of the revelation by engaging in its interpretation and discovering all the principles that the believers needed to know. In addition, there was recognition of a fundamental need of interpretation of the revelation by reason, all the more so when the authority invested with divine knowledge was in occultation. At any rate, the decisive responsibility to guide the community by interpreting revelation rationally needed authorization from a divine source, a sort of designation to assume the *wilaya* similar to that which was initiated at Ghadir Khum that could guarantee to Muslims the availability of right guidance based on Islamic revelation. Ostensibly, only such an authorized person could assume the authority that accrued to the Imam as the rightful successor to the Prophet. Moreover, only the investiture of the *wilaya* (which reserved the right to demand obedience, depending on legal-rational circumstances) and the assuming of political power (*qudra* or *saltana*), which could exact or enforce obedience) could establish the rule of justice and equity on earth, as promised by the Islamic revelation.

In light of the above, the central position of the event at Ghadir Khum for Islam becomes evident. The proclamation by the Prophet on that occasion gave rise to the tension between the ideal leadership promoted through the *wilaya* of Ali ibn Abi Talib and the real one precipitated by human forces to suppress the purposes of Allah on earth. The acknowledgement of the validity of the declaration about the *wilaya* at Ghadir Khum, in some sense, became the yardstick for measuring the true faith in the divine promise for humanity. Consequently, the entire theological question of qualified leadership to further the divine plan and to enable Allah's religion to succeed must be seen from the perspective of the Islamic promise of the creation of an

ethically just order on earth by the rightful possessor of the *wilaya*. The relationship of the leadership (*imama*) and the possession of the *wilaya* make it impossible to conceive an ideal public order in Islam without this leadership being invested in the person in whom the *wilaya* functions as a divine designation. It was for this reason that in Imami Shi'ism the concept of *wilaya* assumed a pivotal status as a precondition to the establishment of the ideal public order based on the divine scale of justice. However, it was important for the Imami theologians to secure the Qur'anic origins of the doctrine of *wilaya* and connect it with the notion of human obligation, the fulfillment of which was regarded as necessary to attain prosperity in this and the next world. At this point, let us turn our attention to the tradition that was to become the cornerstone of the Imami theory of political authority.

Wilaya as the Moral Vision of Islamic Revelation

The cornerstone of the Imami theory of political authority is the existence of an Imam from among the progeny of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, clearly designated by the latter to assume the leadership of the Muslim *Ummah*. Acknowledgement of the authority of the Imam falls within the category of the religious obligations (*al-Takalif al-Shar'iyya*) imposed on the adherents of the Imam. In Imami Shi'ism, the government belonged to the Imam alone, for he was equally entitled to political leadership and religious authority. However, even though the Imam was entitled to both the political and religious leadership, his *imama* was not contingent upon his being invested as the ruler of the *Ummah*. The religious leadership empowered the Imam to interpret Islamic revelation and elaborate on it without committing an error. In this respect, the Imam was like the Prophet, who was endowed with special knowledge and had inherited the knowledge of divine revelation through his designation in the *wilaya*. The Imam is, thus, the link with the way of guidance, and without acknowledging his *wilaya* no person seeking guidance can attain it. This *wilaya* (the

spiritual authority with the right to demand obedience), according to the Imami teaching, was not contingent upon the Imam's being invested as the ruling authority (*sultan*, who could and did exact or enforce obedience) of the community. As such, the spiritual authority resided in Imam Ali from the day the Prophet died, for he became the *wali al-'amr* (the executor of the Prophet's spiritual function) through the Prophet's designation on the occasion of Ghadir Khum. This leadership would continue to be available in the line of the Imams, explicitly designated by the preceding Imams. It was in this latter sense that the *imama* of the *Ummah* came to be conceptualized. Therefore, religiously speaking, to ignore the *wilaya* and disobey these Imams was tantamount to disbelief in Allah's promise that He would provide the necessary guidance to lead humanity toward the creation of an ideal world order.

This confidence in the proclamation of Ghadir Khum regarding the future leadership was directly responsible for generating a threefold religious experience of the Shi'i community which became the decisive sources of the subsequent Imami political attitude. These were martyrdom (*shahada*), occultation (*ghayba*) and precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyya*). What made the Shi'as responsive to their religious leaders has in large measure to do with this threefold religious experience which conditions their political attitudes and inspires their willingness to strive to preserve their religious identity in the context of the larger Muslim community.

Martyrdom (*shahada*) has been sustained as a religious ordeal in Shi'i political history by the conviction that Allah is just and commands human society to pursue justice in accord with the guidance provided by divine revelation to the Prophet. The divinely inspired guidance also requires obedience to the Prophet in his capacity as the head of the Islamic polity which would exist for the implementation of justice. The Imam, who is regarded as the rightful successor of the Prophet, must also be upheld as the true leader of the community to whom obedience

is due in his capacity as the *wali al-'amr* of the Muslim *Ummah*. When the Shi'i Imam, following the death of the Prophet, was denied his right to assume the temporal authority invested in him by divine designation, as the Shi'as believe, direct political action was regarded as justified to establish the rule of justice — to replace a usurpatory rule by a just and legitimate one. The ensuing struggle to install a legitimate political authority resulted in the murder of several Shi'i leaders. In light of the above conviction, these violent deaths were regarded as martyrdom suffered in order to defeat the forces of oppression and falsehood.

The most powerful symbol of this religious experience has without question been the Third Imam of the Shi'as, Husayn ibn Ali (d 61 AH/680 AD), the grandson of the Prophet, whose martyrdom is annually commemorated with solemnity throughout the Shi'i world. The importance attached to the commemoration of Imam Husayn's martyrdom has provided the Shi'i community with a religious paradigm that is traced with remarkable enthusiasm by the community. The commemoration went beyond its basic purpose of recounting the tragedy that befell the family of the Prophet. It provided a platform that was used to communicate the Shi'i teachings to the populace which had little or no academic preparation to utilize written sources on the subject. Indeed, these important gatherings have served as the principal platform of communication with the Shi'i public.

Recognizing the low level of religious education among the lay believers, the Shi'i leaders used the commemorative gatherings as a forum by which to awaken their followers to the injustices of the socio-political realities of their times. With the increase of religious awareness among the Shi'as came the demand for some detailed information on topics that were touched upon in these commemorative gatherings. Subsequently, the mourning gatherings were utilized to disseminate religious knowledge which, among other things, included information on both quietist and activist postures of the Shi'i ideology, depending

upon the socio-political climate at the time. The religious experience of martyrdom in Shi'ism thus became a formidable channel for mobilizing the Shi'i populace.

The second religious experience, namely, occultation (the absence of the Twelfth Imam from the temporal sphere), signified the postponement of the establishment of a just Islamic order, pending the return of the last Imam. Religiously speaking, the doctrine of occultation connoted some sort of divine intervention in saving the life of the Imam, the only awaited Just Ruler, by moving him from the realm of the visible to invisible existence, and conveyed the idea that the situation was beyond the control of those who proposed to overthrow tyrannical rulers in order to establish the Islamic rule of justice. Furthermore, the occultation of the last Imam and his eventual return as the *Mahdi* of the Muslim *Ummah* at a favourable time helped the Shi'as to persevere under difficult circumstances. This hope in the future necessarily implied postponement of the establishment of the thoroughly just Islamic order pending the reappearance of the last Imam, who alone could be invested with the *wilaya* — the Muslim political authority.

Consequently, religious experience derived as a result of belief in the occultation has, on the one hand, raised questions about creating a thoroughly Islamic public order during the absence of the Twelfth Imam; and on the other, it demanded that the entire Shi'i community provide means for its religious, social, and political survival pending the final return of the Imam.

The attitude of tenacity in this religious experience is derived from the belief that the establishment of an Islamic order without divine intervention through the return of the infallible Imam is impossible. The theological problem for anyone to assume the authority accruing to the Imam as the rightful successor of the Prophet, in whom the *wilaya* resembling that of Imam Ali is invested, is in its implications for the universalistic authority of the Imam whose political authority cannot be delegated to any Shi'a however qualified.

On the other hand, the attitude of responsibility of the community in this religious experience is derived from a rational interpretation of the Qur'anic obligation imposed collectively on the community to undertake the duty of supervising its own affairs under the religious and moral injunction of 'enjoining the good and forbidding the evil,' even when the Imam is absent. By this interpretation, some religious leaders delegated the Imam's *wilaya*, political as well as juridical, to a qualified member of the Shi'i community, who, in his capacity as the trustee responsible for directing the community, would be willing to shoulder the obligation of 'enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.'

The third religious experience stemming from the practice of shielding the true intent of the faithful in the community from unbelievers and outsiders through precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyya*) determined the political direction of all the Imams and their followers. The Imams encouraged *taqiyya* and even declared it to be a duty incumbent upon their followers, so as to avoid pressing for the establishment of the ideal rule and overthrow of the wrongful authority of the *de facto* governments. In a sense, *taqiyya* signified the will of the Shi'i community to continue to strive for the realization of the ideal Islamic polity, if not by launching the revolution contingent upon the appearance of the Twelfth Imam and his consolidation as the leader of the community, then at least by preparing the way for such a revolution in the future. In the meantime, the Shi'as had to avoid expressing their true opinions publicly about the shortcomings evident in the various *de facto* Muslim governments, regardless whether Shi'i or Sunni, in such a way as to cause disunity and enmity. Consequently, the practice of *taqiyya* was determined by the conditions of the Shi'as as a minority group living under adverse settings; here again, the religious leadership determined the appropriate time for the community to abandon quietist passivity and engage in activism.

These three religious experiences of the Shi'as during the first three centuries of Islamic history shaped the political outlook of the Imami scholars whenever they were faced with a new

political situation. Rulings on such a situation could be traced back to precedents set by the Imams. But the question of the legitimacy of a political rule established by a professing Imami Shi'a during the absence of the political discretion of the actual *wali al-'amr*, the Twelfth Imam, was an issue that had no precedent set during the lifetime of the Imams. Imami jurists could not give a legal opinion based on a precedent set by the theory of *Imamate* of the infallible Imams. As a result, they had to guide the community by issuing a legal opinion based on their extrapolation in the terms of the documentation provided by the communications transmitted on the authority of the Imams regarding the nature of Imami political authority during the occultation.

The main concern of the Imami scholars was to provide the Shi'i community with practical guidance relevant to their survival under *de facto* political authorities. None of the classical theological texts on the fundamental principles (*usul al-din*) of the Imami school deal with the possibility, not even as a *fait accompli* of temporal Imami authority invested with the *wilaya* of the Imam during the occultation. Such a discussion would necessarily have involved tampering with the terms of the doctrine of the *imama*, which was absolutely ruled out because of the absence of any directly designated deputy of the Twelfth Imam. The 'special deputyship,' during the short occultation (873-941 A.D.), was seen as the ongoing guidance available to the community through the Imam's explicit deputization. With the occurrence of the complete occultation (from 941 AD), the ongoing guidance through deputization of a specific person was terminated.

However, the question of the leadership of the Shi'as in the absence of the Imam was a crucial one. A sense of urgency is reflected in the Imami jurisprudence whenever the question of exercising the Imam's authority without a specifically designated deputy comes up in the treatment of religious obligations requiring the presence of either the Imam or his appointed

deputy for that purpose. It was under these circumstances that the Imami jurists had to deal with the issue of the 'general' deputyship of the Imam, which was vested in them as the custodians of Imami teachings. Nevertheless, the Imami jurists who addressed the question of the deputyship of the 'general' deputy of the Twelfth Imam were very conscious of the theoretical position of the Imam as the absolute wielder of the *wilaya*.

The Trust (*al-Amana*) in the Qur'an and the *Wilaya*

Wilaya in the Qur'an is intrinsically related to the moral vision of Islamic revelation. *Wilaya* in this regard is the faculty of the legal and moral authority, which enables a person in whom this authority is invested to exact obedience to fulfill this moral vision. Accordingly, the concept of *wilaya* is directly connected with the fundamental question of *saltana* — exercise of that legal and moral authority by demanding obedience. Islamic revelation regards the creation of an ethical order as an inevitable projection of personal response to the moral challenge of accepting Islam. Personal devotion to Allah implies the responsibility of furthering the realization of a just society, embodying all the manifestations of religious faith in the material as well as spiritual life of humankind.

This responsibility of striving for one's own welfare and that of the society in which one lives derives from the fact that, according to the Qur'an, humankind has boldly assumed 'the trust' that Allah had offered 'unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he has proved a tyrant and a fool' (33:72).

Shaykh Tusi in his *Al-Masa'il al-Ha'iriyat*[4] explains *amana* as *taklif* (religious-moral obligation imposed by Allah on humanity) and cites the Shi'i opinion as the one in which *amana* is equated

[4]Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi, *Al-Masa'il al-Ha'iriyat*, Najaf, 1969, pp 312-313.

with *wilaya*. However, he argues that such an equation of *amana* with *wilaya* is unnecessary, because the general sense derived from *taklif* also includes acknowledgement of the person in whom *wilaya* is invested. In his Qur'anic exegesis, Shaykh Tusi explains *amana* as the contract (*al-'aqd*) that humankind must fulfill because it has been entrusted to humankind by Allah.[5] He cites several early authorities to show the complication in interpreting the *amana* verse which has theological implications in the realm of human volition and responsibility as the recipient of this 'trust.'[6] However, as Tusi explains it is in the early traditions dealing with the *wilaya* that the *amana* verse has been interpreted as pointing to the *wilaya* of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Allama Tabataba'i's detailed exegesis on this verse should be regarded as the recapitulation of all these early materials, including those written by the Sunni scholars, and his interpretation is derived in light of the early traditions regarding the *wilaya*. According to him, the 'trust' is *al-wilayat al-ilahiyya*, meaning the divine sovereignty which Allah offered to all creatures.[7] Only human beings, having assumed the trust, have the potential to attain perfection and perfect their environment. The crux of the problem in the exegesis of the verse is that if man was the only creature of Allah who accepted the 'trust,' why should he be described as a 'tyrant' and 'fool'? At this point, Allama Tabataba'i's interpretation draws upon the main tenets of Imami theology, which regard the 'trust' in the sense of *wilaya* as a special favour to humanity entailing enormous responsibility to stand by the obligation of guarding it. Accordingly, only human beings are not afraid to bear the burden of this trust, and to accept the consequences of being a 'tyrant' and 'ignorant,' because they only can acquire the opposite attributes

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[5]Tusi, *Tafsir al-Tibyan*, Najaf, 1957, 8/368.

[6]See also, Al-Fadl ibn al-Husayn al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1379, 8/373-374; Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshaf*, 3/276-277.

[7]Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1960, 6/10ff.

— namely, those of being 'just' (*'adil*) and 'knowledgeable' (*'alim*). In fact, both 'tyranny' and 'ignorance' are the primary counterpoise of human responsibility in accepting *al-wilaya al-ilahiyya*, especially as it concerns Allah's providential purpose in allowing imperfect humanity to accept this responsibility. The acceptance of this *wilaya*, furthermore, makes human beings acquire both the responsibility for their actions as well as superiority over all other creatures in the world. It is *al-wilayat al-ilahiyya* that enables them to put society into order in accordance with their unique comprehension of religion.

However, the *wilaya* is given to humankind with a clear warning that it will have to rise above 'tyranny' and 'ignorance' by heeding the call of divine guidance. Human beings, according to the Qur'an, have been endowed with the cognition needed to further their comprehension of the purpose for which they are created, and violition to realize it by using their knowledge. It is through divine guidance that human beings are expected to develop the ability to judge their actions and choose what will lead them to prosperity. But this is not an easy task. It involves spiritual and moral development, something that is most challenging in the face of basic human weaknesses indicated by the Qur'an in the following passage:

'Surely man was created fretful, When evil visits him, impatient, When good visits him, grudging' (70:19-20).

This weakness reveals a basic tension that must be resolved if human beings are to attain the purpose for which they are created. It is at this point that divine guidance is sent through the prophets and revealed messages to provide either the sources and principles or basic norms of social organization under which a divinely sanctioned public order is to be established. The Prophet thus becomes a representative of the divine authority on earth and exercises that authority in conformity with the divine plan for human conduct.[8]

[8]John Wansborough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford, 1978, has discussed the development of the practical

Note Continued on Next Page

In this Qur'anic context of the divine guidance for humanity the Prophet's role should be understood as the head of a State and the founder of a religious order. The sense in which the Qur'an speaks about the *wilaya* of the Prophet is necessarily in conformity with the Qur'anic view of divine guidance governing the whole of human life, not just a limited segment of it. As a consequence, the *wilaya* of the Prophet meant not merely that the Muslim *Ummah* be organized in the context of religious devotion to Allah as explained by the Prophet, but also that it aknowledges his political leadership as well. Thus, the *wilaya* of the Prophet establishes an authoritative precedent regarding the relationship between religion and political leadership in Islam.

It is on the basis of this concept of *wilaya* in the Qur'an that one can say that in Islam religious and political authority are one and the same. This *wilaya* is concerned with the whole life of the Muslim *Ummah*, with the result that it never relinquished its belief in the identity of religion and government as it saw them in the founder of Islam. The Prophet's emergence, the Muslims believe, had a fundamental purpose behind it: to transform the tribal structure of the Arab society at that time into a Muslim *Ummah* — a religious-social-political community under the divinely planned *al-wilayat al-ilahiyya*.

The social transformation envisioned and initiated by the Prophet was the necessary consequence of this *wilaya*, which had to be acknowledged by society as a whole, not merely by individuals as a logical outcome of their faith in Allah. Acknowledgement of the *wilaya* of the Prophet, necessary to live a new life based on divine norms, led to the emphasis on a crucial requirement for the fulfillment of social responsibility of the Muslim *Ummah* — namely, that the *Ummah* always needs to acknowledge a leader, divinely designated, who would exercise

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application of the Qur'an during the process of community formation. In his section dealing with authority he describes the Islamic concept of authority as 'apostolic.' The charismatic figure of the Prophet is depicted therein in an essentially public posture in the emergence of Islamic polity. See especially pp 70-71.

wilaya in order to unite its members in their purpose of creating a just social order under the guidance of Islamic revelation.[9]

Thus, the question of leadership (*imama*) is of utmost significance in attaining the purpose of Islam, because it is only through divinely guided leadership that the creation of an ideal society could be realized. The need for the divinely guided leadership in the fulfillment of divine planning, under the aegis of *al-wilayat al-ilahiyya*, consequently, assumes a central position in the Islamic belief system or worldview, in which the Prophet, as the active representative of the transcendental Allah on earth, is visualized as possessing the divine *wilaya*. If the ultimate objective of Islam was conceived as the creation of an ideal community living under a fitting moral, legal, and social system of Islam on earth, then such an ideal, as enhanced by the Qur'an and shown by the example of the Prophet himself, was dependent on leadership that could assure its realization.

This fact was so important that, both during the Prophet's lifetime and immediately following his death in 632 AD, the question of Islamic leadership became inextricably interwoven with the purpose of Islamic revelation, namely, the creation of an Islamic order. Islamic revelation unquestionably presumed divine guidance through the divinely appointed mediatorship of the Prophet for the realization of Islamic public order. This mediatorship of the Prophet in human affairs was the logical consequence of the strict monotheistic nature of Islam, which precluded the possibility that Allah assume human form, ruling directly over humanity and governing its affairs. Thus, a ruler to represent Allah on earth and to exercise *al-wilayat al-ilahiyya* was deemed necessary in order to achieve the ultimate goal of Islam.

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[9]However, in the composition of Islamic salvation history, it was in Shi'ism that the *wilaya* of the Prophet, as I have elaborated in this paper, was repeatedly and consistently expressed by Shi'i scholars; whereas in Sunnism the *wilaya* (authority in the form of *exemplum* [*imam*]) of the Prophet, in the absence of the charismatic authority following the death of the Prophet, came to be located in the *Sunnah*, which became the *imam* of the community. See: Wansborough, *Sectarian Milieu*, pp 70ff.

Moreover, in light of the basic human weaknesses indicated in the Qur'an, there had always existed an underlying tension between the purpose of creation and the obstacles to its achievement. This tension was to be resolved, according to the Qur'an, by further acts of divine guidance through the Prophet, who became the 'pattern of moral behaviour (*uswa hasana*) for human beings, showing them how to reform their character and bring it into conformity with the divine plan.

Studying the Qur'an in its entirety, it becomes evident that the question of divine sovereignty — *al-wilayat al-ilahiyya* — is the integral element in the creation of an ideal society. It is through such a *wilaya* that the divinely appointed leader is able to provide a set of religious and moral laws and rules by which believers manage their affairs, and through which their public order is governed and should govern itself.

In the Shi'i worldview based on the Qur'anic injunction in which the concept of *wilaya* occurs, the perspective sketched above on the leadership of the Muslim *Ummah* assumes a central position. The pertinence of the *wilaya* to the question of lawful and legitimate authority can be deduced in those sections of the Qur'anic exegesis that deal with the passages on *wilaya*. The following verse of the Qur'an is regarded by Shi'i exegetes as the most important reference to the *wilaya*:

'Only Allah is your *Wali* [guardian] and His Apostle and those who believe,
who perform prayer and pay alms while they bow' (5:55).[10]

This passage establishes the 'guardianship' of Allah, the Prophet, and 'those who believe.' The last phrase ('those who believe'), according to Shi'i commentators, refers to the Imams whose *wilaya* is established through their designation by the Prophet.[11]

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[10]See Tusi, *Tibyan*, 3/559.

[11]Tusi, *Tibyan*, 3/561; Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kulayni, *Al-Usul min al-Kafi*, Tehran, 1964, 2/402, *hadith* ô77; Tabataba'i, *Mizan*, 6/1ff. 'Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din Musawi, *Al-Murji'at*, Beirut, 1963, p 180.

The term *al-wali*, as it occurs in the above context, has been interpreted diversely by Sunni exegetes. Although there is a consensus among them that the verse was revealed in praise of Imam Ali's piety and devotion, the term *al-wali* has been interpreted as denoting *muwalat* ('befriending') of Imam Ali and not necessarily the acceptance of his *wilaya* (authority, in the form of *imama*).[12] But Imami exegetes have taken the term in another of its primary significations, *al-awla* and *al-ahaqq* ('more entitled' [to exercise authority]), because *al-awla* in ordinary usage is often applied to a person who can exercise authority (*al-sultan*) or who has discretionary power in the management of affairs (*al-malik li al-'amr*).[13] Furthermore, *al-wali*, as it occurs in the above passage of the Qur'an, is unlikely to mean a person invested with *wilayat al-nusra* (the authority of 'backing'), because there are numerous explicit references to that effect in other verses of the Qur'an where believers are exhorted to back the religion of Allah by promulgating Allah's laws, a task in which the Prophet and the community of believers assist each other.[14] Rather, *al-wali*, as applied to the Prophet, signifies a person who is invested with *waliyat al-tasarruf*, which means possession of the authority that entitles the *wali* to act in whatever way he judges best, according to his own discretion, as a free agent in the management of the affairs of the community. The *wilayat al-tasarruf* can be exercised only by one so designated by the *wali al-mutlaq* (the absolute authority) or by one who is explicitly appointed by someone in the position of *al-wali bi al-niyaba* (authority invested through deputization). Consequently, the Imam who is designated as *wali* by the Prophet possesses the *wilayat al-tasarruf* and is recognized as the ruler over the people.

This was the meaning of the term in the early usage of the Shi'i

[12]See, for example, Tabari, *Tafsir*, 6/186ff; Zamakhshari, *Kashshaf*, 1/623-624; Baydawi, *Anwar*, p 154.

[13]Tusi, *Tibyan*, 3/559.

[14]See, for example, the Qur'an, 47:7, 7:157, 59:8. See also Tabataba'i, *Mizan*, 6/13; Tusi, *Tibyan*, 3/565, alludes to this.

Imams. In a speech to the Umayyad troops who had come to intercept him on his way to Iraq, Imam Husayn ibn Ali explained to his adversaries the reason why he had refused to pay allegiance to the *khalifah* Yazid, son of Mu'awiya:

'We the family of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) are more entitled (*awla*) to [exercise] the authority (*wilaya*) over you than those [who have taken it for themselves (i.e., the Umayyads)].[15]

Accordingly, *tasarruf* (discretionary authority) has been regarded as the primary and essential import of *wilaya*, especially as it is applied to Allah, the Prophet, and the Imams in the above passage. However, there exists a substantial differentiation in the way *wilaya* is apprehended in relation to Allah, the Absolute Authority (*Al-Wali al-Mutlaq*), on the one hand, and the Prophet and the Imams, the authority through deputization, on the other. When the Qur'an speaks about Allah being the *Wali*, it primarily signifies *Wilayat al-Takwini* — the unconditional *wilaya* 'originating' in Allah, with absolute and all-encompassing authority and discretion over all that Allah has created. To this *wilaya* is sometimes appended *Wilayat al-Nusra*, by means of which Allah helps the believers. Thus the Qur'an reads, 'Allah is the Guardian (*Wali*) of those who believe...Unbelievers have no guardian' (47:11).

Moreover, the Qur'an frequently speaks about Allah's *wilaya* in relation to the believers, by means of which Allah manages the affairs of the believers — their guidance to the right path and assistance to them in obeying Allah's commandments:

'Allah is the Guardian (*Wali*) of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into the light' (2:257).

But when *wali* is used in relation to the Prophet, it is designated as *al-wilayat al-i'tibariyya* — that is, 'relative' authority — dependent upon Allah's appointing him in that position; or

[15]Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, Cairo, 1962, 5/402. See also 5/357, where instead of *awla*, *ahaqq* is used to signify the same conclusion of being 'more entitled to *tasarruf*.'

al-wilayat al-tashri'iyya, the religious-moral-legal authority invested in the Prophet to undertake the legislation and execution of the divine plan on earth. Thus, the Qur'an declares: 'The Prophet has a greater claim (*awla*) on the faithful than they have on themselves' (33:6).[16]

The *wilaya* of the Prophet over the believers is due to his being the Prophet of Allah. As such, the point of reference for his *wilaya* is, in actuality, the *wilaya* of Allah. It is for this reason that his *wilaya* is signified as 'relative' — that is, accorded through designation as a mark of trust. In this sense, the Qur'an speaks of only one kind of *wilaya* — Allah's *wilaya* — which is the only fundamental *wilaya*. The *wilaya* of the Prophet and 'those who believe' (i.e., in this context, the Imams) is dependent upon Allah's will and permission.[17] It is because this *wilaya* was vested in them that the Prophet and the Imams had more right than other believers to exercise full authority, handing down binding decisions on *all* matters pertaining to the welfare of the Muslim *Ummah*, and requiring complete obedience to themselves.

The corollary of this *wilayat al-tasarruf* was the Shi'i belief that not only was the *Imamate* the continuation of the Prophethood, because of the authority vested in the Imams after the Prophet, but it also meant that the Imams were the sole rightful authority to lead the *Ummah* in establishing just public order. The Imams became the just (*'adil*) authority. In a case where the Imam's right to exercise his authority was usurped, the usurping

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[16] *Awla* in this verse has been translated by A J Arberry and others as 'nearer' and 'closer.' But, taking into consideration the Prophet's speech on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, where the same verse of the Qur'an occurs in the form of a question by the Prophet to the Muslims, the implication is in the sense of being 'more entitled.' The Prophet asked the assembled pilgrims: 'Who is more worthy [in the eyes of] the believers than their ownselves?' See: fn 1.

[17] Among the early works, besides the Qur'anic exegesis where *wilaya* occurs in the meaning of *wilayat al-tasarruf*, one can cite the *Ikhtiyar ma'rifat al-rijal* of Abu 'Amr Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Kashshi, especially where he mentions the *wilaya* of Abu al-Khattab, which was denounced by Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq. See *Rijal*, Mashhad, 1348/1964, 296/523. Also, Tabataba'i's *Mizan*, 6/12-14.

authority was rendered illegal, and the ruler unjust (*al-ja'ir*) and unrighteous (*al-zalim*).

The above elucidation of the concept of *wilaya* in the context of the Qur'anic verse about the 'trust' makes the following *hadith* reported by Shaykh Kulayni comprehensible:

Imam Ja'far Sadiq was asked by someone about the passage of the Qur'an that mentions the trust (*amana*) which Allah offered to humankind. The Imam said: 'This trust is the *wilaya* of the *Amir al-Mumineen* [Ali ibn Abi Talib].[18]

The Imam's statement makes it clear that it was the act of accepting or rejecting the *wilaya* of Imam Ali that determined whether one had been faithful to the divine trust or not. The same act, moreover, determined the righteousness or unrighteousness of the ruling authority claiming to be legitimate. In Shi'ism, from its inception, the Imams not only possessed the *wilaya* to establish political authority on earth, they were also regarded as the sole legitimate authority who could and would establish Islamic public order. Imami works treating the theory of political authority unanimously maintained that an equitable government could not be established except by the one who is *ma'sum* — that is, the infallible leader invested with the *wilayat al-tasarruf* to exercise discretionary control over the affairs of the *Ummah*. Furthermore, it was held that the process through which this authority becomes known to the public is explicit designation (*nass*) by the one possessing *al-wilayat al-i'tibariyya* — the 'relative' authority derived through one's being attributed to that office (e.g., Prophethood or *Imamate*) by Allah.

Accordingly, in the Shi'i theory of political authority, power in the sense of authority, having moral and legal supremacy because of *al-wilayat al-tasarruf*, with the right of enforcing obedience to Islamic ideology, can never be invested in a person without proper *nass*; and no government can become equitable (*al-hukumat al-'adila*) if it is not headed by *al-sultan al-'adil*, who

[18]Kulayni, *Kafi*, 2/368, *hadith* o2.

is explicitly appointed by a legitimate authority like the Prophet. If a government is established without *al-sultan al-'adil* as its head, it is declared unjust and the ruler is *al-sultan ja'ir*. Moreover, because the tyrannical ruler, lacking the necessary *al-wilayat al-tasarruf*, has encroached upon the authority of the rightful *wali al-'amr*, he is also *al-zalim* (the oppressor).

Khulafa al-jawr or *al-zalama* is the title applied to these rulers under whom, according to the Shi'as, the world was filled with injustice. Disobedience to these unjust rulers was regarded as obedience to Allah. Thus, according to Mas'udi there were pious Muslims, not necessarily belonging to the Shi'a community, like Awn ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud during the Umayyad *khilafah*, who unheld the principle that anyone who opposes an unjust ruler (i.e., an Umayyad *khalifah*) was not devoid of divine guidance, but the unjust ruler was devoid of it.[19]

It is perhaps significant that the terms *mashru'iyya* (legitimacy) or *ghayr mashru'iyya* (illegitimacy), to denote these two types of government in Islam, do not appear in the major works of Imami jurisprudence of the classical age. These terms, however, do appear in works of the Imamis who wrote during the Qajar period, when the question of the legitimacy of a Shi'i authority to exercise *wilayat al-tasarruf* during the occultation of the Twelfth Imam was being discussed. Thus, in his discussion about the necessity of government during the occultation, Muhammad Husayn Na'ini (d. 1936) uses the concept of 'legitimate' (*mashru'*) government in connection with the constitutional authority established by the approval of the righteous jurists.[20]

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[19]Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar*, Beirut, 1966, 3/193ff. In a more explicit speech, Imam Husayn, on his way to Iraq, reminds the soldiers of the Umayyad commander who had come to arrest him that the Prophet had required the Muslims to challenge a *sultan ja'ir* who had ruled unjustly, breaking all laws of Allah and opposing the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. See Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, 5,403.

[20]Al-Mirza Muhammad Husayn al-Na'ini, *Tanbih al-Umma wa Tanzih al-Milla*, Tehran, 1955, p 15.

Conclusion

By virtue of his being an infallible leader and authoritative interpreter of Islamic revelation through his designation to exercise *al-wilayat al-tasarruf*, the Imam is the sole legitimate authority who could establish the Islamic public order. However, as historical circumstances unfolded, the *Imamate* became divided into temporal and spiritual spheres. The temporal authority of the Imam was regarded as having been usurped by the ruling dynasty, but the spiritual authority remained intact in the Imam who was regarded as Allah's (unanswerable) demonstration (of divine omnipotence) — *Hujjat Allah* (lit. the proof of Allah), empowered to guide the spiritual lives of his adherents as the true Imam. This spiritual authority was not contingent upon the Imam's being invested as the ruling authority (*sultan*) of the *Ummah*. Accordingly, the *Imamate* in the form of religious leadership that began with the Prophet's proclamation about the *wilaya* of Imam Ali at Ghadir Khum in 632 AD continued through all the political circumstances until the last Imam, the Twelfth Imam al-Mahdi, went into occultation (874 AD). It was during this period that questions regarding Imami political authority during the absence of the Imam began to be treated methodically, especially when, for the first time, following the last manifest *Imamate* of Imam Ali (656-660 AD), the temporal authority of the Shi'i Imami Buyid dynasty was established *de facto*.

In view of the prolonged occultation of the Imam and the absence of special designation during this period, the Shi'i scholars in their works on jurisprudence reemphasized the separation between power (which could exact or enforce obedience) and *wilaya* (authority, which reserved the right to demand obedience, depending on legal-rational circumstances) that had existed even during the lifetime of the Imams. Only the investiture of authority and the assuming of political power could establish the rule of justice and equity.

However, delegation of the Imam's *wilaya* to an individual who

could assume both the authority and power of the Imam when the Imam in occultation could not monitor the exercise of that authority was dangerous. This danger was perceived by some jurists, who, pending the return of the Twelfth Imam, ruled out the possibility of absolute claim to political power and authority (*wilaya*) resembling that of the Imam himself. Nevertheless, the rational need to exercise authority in order to manage the affairs of the *Ummah* was recognized and authoritatively legalized. The establishment of the Shi'i dynasties during the occultation did not change the basic doctrine of the Imami leadership whose direction was set on the occasion of Ghadir Khum by the Prophet.

About the Author

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In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Chapter 3

Orientalists and the Event of Ghadir Khum

By Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

I. Introduction

The 18th of Dhil-Hijjah 1410 AH is to be celebrated in the Shi'i world as the 1,400th anniversary of the declaration of Ghadir Khum in which the Prophet said the following about Imam Ali: 'Whomsoever's master (*mawla*) I am, this Ali is also his master.' This event is of such a significance to the Shi'as that no serious scholar of Islam can ignore it. The purpose of this paper is to study how the event of Ghadir Khum was handled by the orientalists. By 'orientalists' I mean the western scholarship of Islam and also those easterners who received their entire Islamic training under such scholars.

Before proceeding further, a brief narration of the event of Ghadir Khum would not be out of place. This will be especially helpful to those who are not familiar with Ghadir Khum. While returning from his last pilgrimage, Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, received the following command of Allah: 'O Messenger! Convey what had been revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not do so, then [it would be as if] you have not conveyed His message [at all]. Allah will protect you from the people' (5:67). Therefore he stopped at Ghadir Khum on Dhil-Hijjah 18, 10 A.H. to convey the message to the pilgrims before they dispersed. As it was very hot, a dais shaded with branches

was contructed for him. Then the Prophet gave a long sermon. At one point, he asked his faithful followers whether he, Muhammad, had more authority (*awla*) over the believers than they had over themselves; the crowd cried out: 'Yes, it is so, O Apostle of Allah!' Then he took Ali by the hand and declared: 'Whomever's master (*mawla*) I am, this Ali is also his master' (*Man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha Aliyun mawlahu*). Then the Prophet also announced his impending death and charged the believers to remain attached to the Qur'an and *Ahl al-Bayt*. This summarizes the important parts of the event of Ghadir Khum.

The main body of this paper is divided as follows: Part II is a brief survey of the approach used by the orientalists in studying Shi'ism. Part III deals with the approach used to study Ghadir Khum in particular. Part IV is a critical review of what M A Shaban has written about the event in his *Islamic History AD 600-750*. This will be followed by a conclusion.

II: Shi'ism and the Orientalists

When the Egyptian writer, Muhammad Qutb named his book *Islam: the Misunderstood Religion*, he was politely expressing the Muslim sentiment about the way the orientalists have treated Islam and Muslims in general. The word 'misunderstood' implies that at least a genuine attempt was made to understand Islam. However, a more blunt criticism of orientalism, shared by the majority of the Muslims, comes from Edward Said: 'The hardest thing to get most academic experts on Islam to admit is that what they say and do as scholars is set in a profoundly, and in some ways an offensively, political context. Everything about the study of Islam in the contemporary west is saturated with political importance, but hardly any writers on Islam, whether expert or general, admit the fact in what they say. Objectivity is assumed to be inherent in learned discourse about other societies, despite the long history of political, moral and religious concern felt in all societies, western or Islamic, about the alien, the strange and the different. In Europe, for example, the orientalists have traditionally been affiliated directly with

colonial offices.'[1]

Instead of assuming that objectivity is inherent in learned discourses, the western scholarship has to realize that pre-commitment to a political or religious tradition, on a conscious or subconscious level, can lead to biased judgement. As Marshall Hudgson writes: 'Bias comes especially in the questions he poses and in the type of category he uses, where indeed, bias is especially hard to track down because it is hard to suspect the very terms one uses, which seem so innocently neutral...'[2] The Muslim reaction to the image portrayed of them by the western scholarship is beginning to get its due attention. In 1979 the highly respected orientalist Albert Hourani said: 'The voices of those from the Middle East and North Africa telling us that they do not recognize themselves in the image we have formed of them are too numerous and insistent to be explained in terms of academic rivalry or national pride.'[3] This was about Islam and Muslims *vis-a-vis* the orientalists.

However, when we focus on the study of Shi'ism by the orientalists, the word 'misunderstood' is not strong enough, rather it is an understatement. Not only is Shi'ism misunderstood, it has been ignored, misrepresented and studied mostly through the heresiographic literature of its opponents. It seems as if the Shi'as had no scholars and literature of their own. To borrow an expression from Marx: 'They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented,' and that also by their adversaries!

The reason for this state of affairs lies in the paths through which the western scholars entered the fields of Islamic studies. Hodgson, in his excellent review of western scholarship, writes:

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[1]Edward W Said, *Covering Islam*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981, p xvii.

[2]Marshall G S Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, p 27.

[3]Albert Hourani, 'Islamic History, Middle Eastern History, Modern,' in M H Kerr (ed), *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems*, California: Undena Publications, 1979, p 10.

'First, there were those who studied the Ottoman empire, which played so major a role in modern Europe. They came to it usually in the first instance from the viewpoint of European diplomatic history. Such scholars tended to see the whole of Islamdom from the political perspective of Istanbul, the Ottoman capital. Second, there were those, normally British, who entered Islamic studies in India so as to master Persian as good civil servants, or at least they were inspired by Indian interests. For them, the imperial transition of Delhi tended to be the culmination of Islamicate history. Third, there were the Semitists, often interested primarily in Hebrew studies, who were lured into Arabic. For them, headquarters tended to be Cairo, the most vital of Arabic-using cities in the nineteenth century, though some turned to Syria or the Maghrib. They were commonly philogians rather than historians, and they learned to see Islamicate culture through the eyes of the late Egyptian and Syrian Sunni writers most in vogue in Cairo. Other paths — that of the Spaniards and some Frenchmen who focused on the Muslims in Medieval Spain, that of the Russians who focused on the northern Muslims — were generally less important.'[4] It is quite obvious that none of these paths would have led western scholars to the centres of Shi'i learning or literature. The majority of what they studied about Shi'ism was channeled through non-Shi'i sources. Hodgson says: 'All paths were at one in paying relatively little attention to the central areas of the Fertile Crescent and Iran, with their tendency towards Shi'ism; areas that tended to be most remote from western penetration.'[5] And after the First World War, 'the Cairene path to Islamic studies became the Islamicist's path par excellence, while other paths to Islamic studies came to be looked on as of more local relevance.'[6]

Therefore, whenever an orientalist studied Shi'ism through

[4]Hodgson, *op. cit.*, pp 39-40.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]*Ibid.*

Uthmaniyyah, Cairene or Indian paths, it was quite natural for him to be biased against Shi'i Islam. 'The Muslim historians of doctrine [who are mostly Sunni] always tried to show that all other schools of thought than their own were not only false but, if possible, less than truly Muslim. Their works describe innumerable "*firqahs*" in terms which readily misled modern scholars into supposing they were referring to so many "heretical sects".'[7] And so we see that until very recently, western scholars easily described Sunnism as 'orthodox Islam' and Shi'ism as a 'heretical sect.' After categorizing Shi'ism as a heretical sect of Islam, it became 'innocently natural' for western scholars to absorb the Sunni scepticism concerning the early Shi'i literature. Even the concept of *taqiyya* was blown out of proportion and it was assumed that every statement of a Shi'i scholar had a hidden meaning. And, consequently, whenever an orientalist found time to study Shi'ism, his precommitment to the Judeo-Christian tradition of the west was compounded with the Sunni bias against Shi'ism. One of the best examples of this compounded bias is found in the way the event of Ghadir Khum was approached by the orientalists.

III. The Event of Ghadir Khum:
From Oblivion to Recognition

The event of Ghadir Khum is a very good example to trace the Sunni bias which found its way into the mental state of the orientalists. Those who are well-versed with the polemic writings of Sunnis know that whenever the Shi'as present a *hadith* or a historical evidence in support of their view, a Sunni polemicist would respond in the following manner:

Firstly, he will outright *deny* the existence of any such *hadith* or historical event.
Secondly, when confronted with hard evidence from his own sources, he will cast *doubt* on the reliability of the transmitters of that *hadith* or event.
Thirdly, when he is shown that all the transmitters are reliable

[7] *Ibid.* pp 66-67.

by Sunni standards, he will give an *interpretation* to the *hadith* or the event which will be quite different from that of the Shi'as.

These three levels form the classical response of the Sunni polemicists in dealing with the arguments of the Shi'as. A quotation from Rosenthal's translation of Ibn Khaldun's *The Muqaddimah* would suffice to prove my point. (Ibn Khaldun is quoting the following part from *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, a heresiographic work of Ash-Sharistani.) According to Ibn Khaldun, the Shi'as believe that:

'Ali is the one whom Muhammad appointed. The (Shi'a) transmit texts (of traditions) in support of (this belief)...The authority of the *Sunnah* and the transmitters of the religious law do not know these texts [1]. Most of them are suppositions, or [2] some of their transmitters are suspect, or [3] their (true) interpretation is very different from the wicked interpretation that (the Shi'a) give to them.'[8]

Interestingly, the event of Ghadir Khum has suffered the same fate at the hands of the orientalists. With the limited time and sources available to me at this moment, I was surprised to see that most works on Islam have ignored the event of Ghadir Khum, indicating, by its very absence, that the orientalists believed this event to be 'supposititious' and an invention of the Shi'as. Margoliouth's *Muhammad & the Rise of Islam* (1905), Brockelmann's *History of the Islamic People* (1939), Arnold and Guillaume's *The Legacy of Islam* (1931), Guillaume's *Islam* (1954), von Grunebaum's *Classical Islam* (1963), Arnold's *The Caliphate* (1965) and *The Cambridge History of Islam* (1970) have completely ignored the event of Ghadir Khum. Why did these and many other western scholars ignore the event of Ghadir Khum? Since western scholars mostly relied on anti-Shi'i works, they naturally ignored the event of Ghadir Khum. L Veccia Vaglieri, one of the contributors to the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1953), writes:

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[8]Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, tr Franz Rosenthal, Vol 1, New York: Pantheon Books, 1958, p 403. In Arabic, see Vol 1, Beirut: Maktatatul Madrasah, 1961, p 348.

'Most of the sources which form the basis of our [orientalists'] knowledge of the life of the Prophet (Ibn Hisham, Al-Tabari, Ibn Sa'd, etc) pass in silence over Muhammad's stop at Ghadir Khum, or, if they mention it, say nothing of his discourse (the writers evidently feared to attract the hostility of the Sunnis, who were in power, by providing material for the polemic of the Shi'as who used these words to support their thesis of Ali's right to the caliphate). *Consequently, the western biographers of Muhammad, whose work is based on these sources, equally make no reference to what happened at Ghadir Khum.*'[9]

Then we come to those few orientalists who mention the *hadith* or the event of Ghadir Khum but express their scepticism about its authenticity — the second stage in the classical response of the Sunni polemicists.

The first example of such scholars is Ignaz Goldziher, a highly respected German orientalist of the nineteenth century. He discusses the *hadith* of Ghadir Khum in his *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889-1890) translated in English as *Muslim Studies* (1966-1971) under the chapter entitled 'The *Hadith* in its Relation to the Conflicts of the Parties of Islam.' Coming to the Shi'as, Goldziher writes:

'A stronger argument in their [Shi'a's] favour...was their conviction that the Prophet had expressly designated and appointed Ali as his successor before his death...Therefore the 'Alid adherents were *concerned with inventing* and authorizing traditions which prove Ali's installation by the direct order of the Prophet. The most widely-known tradition (the authority of which is not denied even by orthodox authorities though they deprive it of its intention by a different interpretation) is the tradition of Khum, which *came into being* for this purpose and is one of the firmest foundations of the theses of the 'Alid party.'[10]

One would expect such a renowned scholar to prove how the

[9] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1953, see under 'Ghadir Khum.'

[10] I Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, tr Barber and Stern, Vol 2, Chicago: Aldine Inc, 1971, pp 112-113.

Shi'as 'were concerned with inventing' traditions to support their theses, but nowhere does Goldziher provide any evidence. After citing Al-Tirmidhi and Al-Nasa'i in the footnote as the sources of *hadith* for Ghadir, he says: 'Al-Nasa'i had, as is well-known, pro-'Alid inclinations, and also Al-Tirmidhi included in his collection tendentious traditions favouring Ali, e.g., the *tayr* tradition.'[11] This is again the same old classical response of the Sunni polemicists — discredit the transmitters as unreliable or adamantly accuse the Shi'as of inventing the traditions.

Another example is the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1911-1938), which has a short entry under 'Ghadir Khum' by F Bhul, a Danish orientalist who wrote a biography of the Prophet. Bhul writes: 'The place has become famous through a tradition which had its origin among the Shi'as but is also found among the Sunnis, viz., the Prophet on journey back from Hudaybiyya (according to others from the Farewell Pilgrimage) here said of Ali: 'Whomsoever I am lord of, his lord is Ali also!'[12] Bhul makes sure to emphasize that the *hadith* and the event of Ghadir has 'its origins among the Shi'as'!

Another striking example of the orientalists' ignorance about Shi'ism is *A Dictionary of Islam* (1965) by Thomas Hughes. Under the entry of Ghadir, he writes: 'A festival of the Shi'as on the 18th of the month of Zu 'l-Hijjah, when three images of dough filled with honey are made to represent Abu Bakr, Umar and Usman, which are stuck with knives, and the honey is sipped as typical of the blood of the usurping *khalifahs*. The festival is named Ghadir, 'a pool,' and the festival commemorates, *it is said*, Muhammad having declared Ali his successor at Ghadir Khum, a watering place midway between Makkah and al-Madinah.'[13]. Coming from a Shi'i background of India, having studied in Iran for 10 years and lived among the Shi'a of

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[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1911-1938, see under 'Ghadir Khum.'

[13] Thomas P Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, New Jersey: Reference Book Publishers, 1965, p 138.

Africa and North America, I have yet to see, hear or read about the dough and honey ritual of Ghadir!! I was more surprised to see that even Vaglieri, in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, has incorporated this rubbish into his fairly excellent article on Ghadir Khum. He adds at the end: 'This feast also holds an important role among the Nusayris.' It is quite possible that the dough and honey ritual is observed by the Nusayris; it has nothing to do with the Shi'as. But do all orientalists know the difference between the Shi'as and the Nusayris? I very much doubt so.

A fourth example from the contemporary scholars who have treaded the same path is Philip Hitti in his *History of the Arabs* (1964). After mentioning that the Buyids established 'the rejoicing on that [day] of the Prophet's *alleged appointment* of Ali as his successor at Ghadir Khum,' he describes the location of Ghadir Khum in the footnote as 'a spring between Makkah and al-Madinah where *Shi'ite tradition* asserts the Prophet declared, "Whosoever I am lord of, his lord is Ali also".'[14] Although this scholar mentions the issue of Ghadir in a passing manner, still he wants to leave his readers with the impression that the *hadith* of Ghadir is a 'Shi'ite tradition.'

To these scholars who, consciously or unconsciously, have absorbed the Sunni bias against Shi'ism and insist on the Shi'i origin or invention of the *hadith* of Ghadir, I would just repeat what Vaglieri has said in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* about Ghadir Khum:

'It is, however, certain that Muhammad did speak in this place and utter the famous sentence, for the account of this event has been preserved, either in a concise form or in detail, not only by Al-Ya'kubi, whose sympathy for the 'Alid cause is well-known, but also in the collection of traditions which are considered as canonical, especially in the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal; and the *hadiths* are so numerous and so well attested by the different

[14]Philip K Hitti, *A History of the Arabs*, London: Macmillan & Co, 1964, p 471.

isnads that it does not seem possible to reject them.'[15]

Vaglieri continues: 'Several of these *hadith* are cited in the bibliography, but it does not include the *hadith* which, although reporting the sentence, omit to name Ghadir Khum, or those which state that the sentence was pronounced at al-Hudaybiyya. The complete documentation will be facilitated when the *Concordance* of Wensinck has been completely published. In order to have an idea of how numerous these *hadiths* are, it is enough to glance at the pages in which Ibn Kathir has collected a great number of them with their *isnads*.'

It is time the western scholarship made itself familiar with the Shi'i literature of the early days as well as of the contemporary period. There is no need to wait for Wensinck's *Concordance*. The Shi'i scholars have produced great works on the issue of Ghadir Khum. Here I will just mention two of those. The first is *'Abaqat al-Anwar* written in Persian by Allama Mir Hamid Husayn al-Musawi (d 1304 AH) of India. Allama Mir Hamid Husayn has devoted two bulky volumes (consisting of about 1,080 pages) on the *isnad*, *tawatur* and meaning of the *hadith* of Ghadir. The second is *Al-Ghadir* in 11 volumes in Arabic by Allama Abdul Husayn al-Amini where he gives with full references the names of 110 *sahaba* of the Prophet and also 84 *tabi'un* (disciples of the *sahaba*) who have narrated the *hadith* of Ghadir. He has also chronologically given the names of the historians, traditionalists, exegetists and poets who have mentioned the *hadith* of Ghadir from the first until the fourteenth Islamic century.

IV. Shaban & His New Interpretation

Among the latest work by the western scholarship on the history of Islam is M A Shaban's *Islamic History AD 600-750*, subtitled 'A New Interpretation,' in which the author claims not only to use newly discovered material but also to reexamine and reinterpret material which has been known to us for many

[15] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1953, see under 'Ghadir Khum.'

decades. Shaban, a lecturer of Arabic at SOAS of the University of London, is not prepared to even consider the event of Ghadir Khum. He writes: 'The famous Shi'ite tradition that he [the Prophet] designated Ali as his successor at Ghadir Khum should not be taken seriously.' Shaban gives two 'new' reasons for not taking the event of Ghadir seriously:

'Such an event is inherently improbable considering the Arabs' reluctance to entrust young untried men with great responsibility. Furthermore, at no point do our sources show the Madinan community behaving as if they had heard of this designation.'[16]

Let us critically examine each of these reasons given by Shaban.

(1) The traditional reluctance of the Arabs to entrust young men with great responsibility. First of all, had not the Prophet introduced many things to which the Arabs were traditionally reluctant? Was not Islam itself accepted by the Makkans very reluctantly? This 'traditional reluctance,' instead of being an argument against the appointment of Ali, is actually part of the argument used by the Shi'as. They agree that the Arabs were reluctant to accept Imam Ali as the Prophet's successor not only because of his young age but also because he had killed their leaders in the battles of Islam. According to the Shi'as, Allah also mentions this reluctance when after ordering the Prophet to proclaim Imam Ali as his successor ('O Messenger! Convey what had been revealed to you...'), He reassured His Messenger by saying that 'Allah will protect you from the people' (5:67). The Prophet was commissioned to convey the message of Allah, no matter whether the Arabs liked it or not.

Moreover, this 'traditional reluctance' was not an irrevocable custom of the Arab society as Shaban wants us to believe. Jafry, in *The Origin and Early Development of Shi'a Islam*, says: 'Our sources do not fail to point out that, though the 'Senate' (*Nadwa*) of pre-Islamic Makkah was generally a council of elders only, the sons of the chieftain Qusayy were privileged to

[16]M A Shaban, *Islamic History AD 600-750*, Cambridge: University Press, 1971, p 16.

be exempted from this age restriction and were admitted to the council despite their youth. In later times, more liberal concessions seem to have been in vogue; Abu Jahl was admitted despite his youth, and Hakim ibn Hazm was admitted when he was only 15 or 20 years old.' Then Jafry quotes Ibn 'Abd Rabbih: 'There was no monarchic king over the Arabs of Makkah in the *jahiliyyah*. So whenever there was a war, they took a ballot among chieftains and elected one as 'King,' were he a minor or a grown man. Thus on the day of Fijar, it was the turn of Banu Hashim, and as a result of the ballot Al-Abbas, who was then a mere child, was elected, and they seated him on the shield.'[17]

Thirdly, we have an example in the Prophet's own decisions during the last days of his life when he entrusted the command of the army to Usama ibn Zayd, a young man who was hardly 20 years of age.[18] He was appointed over the elders of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, and, indeed, many of the elders resented this decision of the Prophet.[19] If the Prophet of Islam could appoint the young and untried Usama ibn Zayd over the elders of the *Muhajirun*, then why should it be 'inherently inprobable' to think that the Prophet had appointed Imam Ali as his successor?

(2) The traditional reluctance to entrust tried men with great responsibility. Apart from the young age of Imam Ali, Shaban also refers to the reluctance of the Arabs in entrusting 'untried men with great responsibility.' This implies that Abu Bakr was selected by the Arabs because he had been 'tried with great responsibilities.' I doubt whether Shaban would be able to substantiate the implication of his claim from Islamic history. One will find more instances where Imam Ali was entrusted by

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[17]S H M Jafry, *The Origin and Early Development of Shi'a Islam*, Qum: Ansariyan Publications, n.d., p 22.

[18]M H Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, tr Al-Faruqi (n.p., American Trust Publications, 1976, p 492.

[19]See the *Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd and other major works on *Seerah*.

the Prophet with greater responsibilities than Abu Bakr. Imam Ali was left behind in Makkah during the Prophet's migration to mislead the enemies and also to return the properties of various people which were given in trust to the Prophet. Imam Ali was tried with greater responsibilities during the early battles of Islam in which he was always successful. When the declaration (*bara'at*) against the pagan Arabs of Makkah was revealed, first Abu Bakr was entrusted to convey it to the Makkans, but later on this great responsibility was taken away from him and entrusted to Imam Ali. Imam Ali was entrusted with the city and citizens of Medina while the Prophet had gone on the expedition to Tabuk. Imam Ali was appointed the leader of the expedition to Yemen. These are just a few examples which come to mind at random. Therefore, on a comparative level, Ali ibn Abi Talib was a person who had been tried and entrusted with greater responsibilities than Abu Bakr.

(3) The behaviour of the Medinan community about the declaration of Ghadir. Firstly, if an event can be proved as true by the accepted academic standards (of the Sunnis, of course), then the reaction of the people to that event is immaterial.

Secondly, the same 'traditional reluctance' used by Shaban to discredit the declaration of Ghadir can be used here against his scepticism towards the event of Ghadir. This traditional reluctance, besides other factors which are beyond the scope of this paper,[20] can be used to explain the behaviour of the Medinan community.

Thirdly, although the Medinan community was silent during the events which kept Imam Ali away from the *khilafah*, there were many among them who had witnessed the declaration of Ghadir Khum. On quite a few occasions, Imam Ali implored the *sahaba* of the Prophet to bear witness to the declaration of Ghadir. Here I will just mention one instance which took place in Kufa during the *khilafah* of Imam Ali, 24 years after the Prophet's death.

[20]For more details, see S S A Rizvi, *Imamate*, Tehran: WOFIS, 1985, pp 120-121.

Imam Ali heard that some people were doubting his claim of precedency over the previous *khulafah*, therefore, he came to a gathering at the mosque and implored the eyewitnesses of the event of Ghadir Khum to verify the truth of the Prophet's declaration about his being the lord and master of all the believers. Many *sahaba* of the Prophet stood up and verified the claim of Imam Ali. We have the names of 24 of those who testified on behalf of Imam Ali, although other sources like the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal and *Majma' as-Zawa'id* of Hafiz al-Haythami put that number at 30. Also bear in mind that this incident took place 25 years after the event of Ghadir Khum, and during this period hundreds of eyewitnesses had died naturally or in the battles fought during the first two *khulafah's* rule. Add to this the fact that this incident took place in Kufa which was far from the centre of the *sahabas*, Medina. This incident which took place in Kufa in the year 35 A.H. has itself been narrated by four *sahaba* and 14 *tabi'un* and has been recorded in most books of history and tradition.[21]

In conclusion, the behaviour of the Medinan community after the death of the Prophet does not automatically make the declaration of Ghadir Khum improbable. I think this will suffice to make Shaban realize that his is not a 'new' intepretation; rather it exemplifies, in my view, the first stage of the classical response of the Sunni polemicists — an outright denial of the existence of an event or a *hadith* which supports the Shi'i views — which has been absorbed by the majority of the western scholars of Islam.

V. Conclusion

In this brief survey, I have shown that the event of Ghadir Khum is a historical fact which cannot be rejected, and that in studying Shi'ism, the precommitment to the Judeo-Christian tradition of the orientalists was compounded with the Sunni bias against Shi'ism. Consequently, the event of Ghadir Khum

[21]For full references, see Al-Amini, *Al-Ghadir*, Vol 1, Tehran: Mu'assatul Muwahhidi, 1976, pp 166-186.

was ignored by most western scholars and emerged from oblivion only to be handled with scepticism and reinterpretation.

I hope this one example will convince at least some western scholars to reexamine their methodology in studying Shi'ism, and instead of approaching it largely through the works of heresiographers like Ash-Sharistani, Ibn Hazm, Al-Maqrizi and Al-Baghdadi who present the Shi'as as a heretical sect of Islam, they should turn to more objective works of both the Shi'as as well as the Sunnis.

The Shi'as are tired, and rightfully so, of being portrayed as a heretical sect that emerged because of the political and economic circumstances of the early Islamic period. They demand to represent themselves instead of being represented by their adversaries.

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In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Chapter 4

The Theological Aspects of Ghadir

By Husein Khimjee

All Praise and Glory belong to Allah, Lord of the universe and the Only True Sovereign. I praise Allah, and from Him do I crave support and guidance. And I seek refuge in Allah from the malice of my *nafs* and from any evil act; whomever Allah guides can never go astray; and whomever is misguided by Allah is truly lost and can never find guidance.

I testify that there is no god but Allah, the Only One, and He has no partner of any sort, and I testify that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger sent by Allah with total guidance and true faith so that he should proclaim it over all the other ideologies; and in this Allah Himself is the Witness.

And peace and blessings of Allah be on our Leader and the Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets, sent as a blessing to mankind, Muhammad (Abul-Qasim). And peace and blessings of Allah be on his progeny, the purified, just as Allah Himself has revealed in the Qur'an: 'Verily, Allah intendeth but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanliness, O ye People of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification' (33:33).

I thank Allah for making me into a Muslim and for His Bounteous Help, for indeed without His Bounteous Help this article would not have been possible. I pray to Allah that He

guides us all and increases our faith and knowledge and brings about our death in no other state except as Muslims. Amen.

One of the most unique things in any aspect of Islamic theology is that its truth manifests itself in our daily lives. All that is required to see this is a little pondering. Take, for example, the theology expanded in the Qur'an that all things have their own term appointed. Thus, the Qur'an tells us: 'What! Reflect they not within themselves; (to see clearly that) created not Allah the heavens and the earth and what is between them two except with truth, and for an appointed term?' (30:8)

The principle — *ajal*, or more precisely, *fī ajalin musammah* — manifests itself very clearly in our daily lives. Thus we find that everything around us has an appointed term of its own, whether it belongs to the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdom.

With this principle, it becomes very interesting when we note that even prophethood had a life cycle of its own; for it started with Prophet Adam, upon whom be peace, and ended with the Seal of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his family. Indeed this aspect of prophethood is popular with many Muslim thinkers and scholars of the past. Thus we are shown in one source,[1] for example, that a Sufi poet, Mahmud Shabistari, wrote in his book *Gulshan-i-Raz*, the following couplet in Farsi:

'*Nabuwwat ra zuhur ra az Adam amad Kamalash dar wujud Khatam amad.*' (The first appearance of prophethood was in Adam and its perfection was in the Seal of the Prophets.)

We find in this couplet a reference pointing clearly to the life cycle prophethood went through beginning with Adam and flowering with the Last Prophet.

But this has posed a dilemma for mankind because while prophethood reached its optimum, the history of humanity has

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[1]Syed Hosein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, Boston: George Allen & Urwin Beacon Press, 1966, p 68.

outlived the term of prophethood. Therefore, in the absence of future prophets, who should guide mankind? What about Allah's promise in the Qur'an to continue guiding mankind, for example: '...And if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.' (2:38)

This dilemma for mankind is very serious as well as interesting. It is serious because without the guidance from Allah, the status of mankind would be such that it could not be salved. Mankind is already in a state of loss (103:2) and forgetfulness (36:78), most importantly he carries the burden of the trust and covenant with Allah (7:172-173). The dilemma is also interesting because Allah's promise cannot fail and yet we clearly see that the term of prophethood ended with the Last Prophet. The Qur'an itself declares him the 'Seal of the Prophets' (33:40).

The truth of the matter is that the only answer to this dilemma is found in the episode of Ghadir Khum. Apart from providing a solution to this problem, Ghadir also charts once and for all a clear path for the guidance and salvation of mankind. Ghadir provides once and for all the *usul* of the only acceptable faith to Allah. This is a challenge the defence of which we find directly from the Qur'an, thus: 'The (only) faith before Allah is Islam' (3:19). And in another place: 'If anyone desires (to follow) a faith other than Islam, *fa lan yuqbala minhu* (never will it be accepted of him); and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who are lost' (3:85).

Most importantly, the final revelation from Allah to the Prophet took place at Ghadir and the fate of the salvation of mankind is sealed in Islam. The revelation is clear and leaves no doubt about Allah's seal over Islam. 'This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your faith' (5:3). Ghadir's theology is therefore very interesting and must be seen in its true perspective.

Islam believes that all prophets were Muslims.[2] By this doctrine, they gave a clear message to worship only One God, Allah. They each proclaimed their prophethood and they each warned about the impending Day of Judgement. Since the prophethood had not yet ended, they also declared about the advent of the final Prophet;[3] with whom not only would end the prophethood but also, as is obvious, the process of revelation. Henceforth, there would be no revelation and no new scripture. The Qur'an, therefore, would be protected by Allah Himself so that no one would ever tamper with it.[4] One reason for Allah's guarantee of the Qur'an's protection is that together with the *'Itrat* of the Prophet, it would act as *al-thaqal al-akbar* (the weightiest or the heaviest) force in guiding mankind in the absence of the Prophet. This is clear also from the *hadith* of *Al-Thaqalayn*.[5]

The prime duty of the *'Itrat* of the Prophet would be to uphold the injunctions of the Qur'an and disallow any innovations or

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[2]Our discussion in this article makes this theology very clear. Islam reached its flowering in Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace. All the prophets that preceded him were Muslims. The Qur'an testifies this for each prophet. See for example the discussion Prophet Yaqub (Jacob) had with his sons in the Qur'an — 2:131-132. Also see 2:130.

[3]See for example 61:6 where Prophet Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus) gives glad tidings 'of an apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad (i.e., the 'Praised One,' Muhammad). It must be said that such prophecies are seen both in the *Taurat* (Torah) as well as the *Injil* (Gospel). See for example, Deuteronomy 18:18 and the Gospel of John 14:16, 15:26 and 16:7.

[4]See 15:9 — 'Undoubtedly We (Allah) have sent down the Message (Qur'an) and assuredly We will guard it (forever).' This guarantee has already withstood the test of time because in the last two hundred years several attempts have been made to distort not only the Qur'an but all revealed scriptures from Allah. The Qur'an is the only scripture that remains totally unaltered and is presented exactly as it was revealed.

[5]The actual wording of this *hadith* is as follows: *'Inni Tarikun fikumu al-thaqalayn, al-thaqal al-akbar wa al-thaqal al-asghar. Fa amma al-akbar fa Kitabu Rabbiy wa amma al-thaqal al-asghar fa 'Itrati Ahli Baytiy fahfizuni fihima falan tadallu ma tamassaktum bihima.' ('I am leaving behind you the two weights, the greater and the lesser. As for the greater, it is the Book of my Lord and as for the lesser, it is my progency, the People of my House. Guard well my memory through the two weights! You will not go astray as long as you hold fast to both of them.') (Al-Ayyashi, Abu al-Nasr Muhammad ibn Mas'ud ibn Ayyash al-Sulami al-Samarqandi, Kitab Tafsir,* edited by Hashim al-Rasuli al-Mahallati, Vol 1, p 5)

schisms in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.[6] The duty to uphold these would remain in the hands of an Imam who would be endowed with *'ilm* and be appointed through the process of *nass*.

Since humanity henceforth would be guided by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* under an Imam and since the immediate Imam after the demise of the Prophet would be Imam Ali, upon whom be peace, the Prophet has shown Imam Ali as his clear successor throughout his mission leading up to the event of Ghadir Khum. As we shall see, that in doing so, the Prophet was clearly charting the principles of the *Usul-e Din* to be followed.

There are several incidents recorded in all authentic sources — both Shi'i as well as Ahle Sunnat wa al-Jama'ah (Sunni) — where the Prophet advanced Imam Ali to indicate his *wilaya* over all others. This began immediately with the very first declaration of his prophethood to his near relatives. The events that led to the invitation to his near relatives are clear from all sources. Allah commanded the Prophet to warn the relatives. We know that he invited his relatives and warned them as commanded by Allah. The Prophet gave at that time, just as he was to do at Ghadir at the end of his mission, an eloquent *khutbah* (the theology of which we shall look at a little later) at the end of which Imam Ali was advanced as his successor.

It is also a fact that including the above incident, Muslims believe through authentic *ahadith* that the Prophet regarded Imam Ali as a companion who possessed nine other excellent merits. These are:

(1) Imam Ali was the first man to believe in Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah.
(2) When the Prophet received the command from Allah to

[6]We see both these principles clearly applying in the lives of the Twelve Imams. Many of the sermons of Imam Ali in *Nahjul Balaghah* warn about innovations in religion and abandoning the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. We also see that in the *shura* of Umar al-Khattab, Imam Ali refused to accept the *khilafah* if it went beyond following the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. We find this was also the first condition Imam Hasan laid in his treaty with Mu'awiya.

leave Medina, Imam Ali willingly risked his life by sleeping in his bed covered in the blanket used by the Prophet.

(3) Imam Ali together with Lady Fatimah and Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, peace be upon all of them, were under the blanket with the Prophet[7] when Jibreel (Gabriel) brought the news and the Prophet recited the verse: '*Innama yuridu Allahu liyudhhiba 'ankumu rrijsa Ahlul Bayti was yutahhirukum tathira*' ('Verily, Allah intendeth but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanliness, O ye People of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification.')

(4) During the battle of Khaybar, the Prophet said that he would send to fight the enemies one whom Allah would not put to shame because he loved Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet called Imam Ali, and although Imam Ali had sore eyes, the Prophet applied saliva from his own mouth onto Imam Ali's eyes, prayed for him and handed him the flag. Imam Ali returned from Khaybar victorious.

(5) The Prophet sent Imam Ali with the revealed verses from Surat al-Bara'a (al-Tawbah) to read to the infidels saying that only Imam Ali could convey the revelation because Imam Ali was from him and he was from Imam Ali.

(6) In Medina, once the Prophet blocked all the doors opening into the Prophet's mosque except the door of Imam Ali. The Prophet also explained later from the pulpit that he did things as commanded by Allah.

(7) The Prophet told Imam Ali that he (Ali) would be the guardian of all the believers, male and female, after his (the Prophet's) demise.

(8) When the Prophet was leaving for the expedition of Tabuk, the Prophet asked Imam Ali to remain behind in charge of Medina. When Imam Ali showed a desire to accompany him (so that he should get a chance to attain the status of *shaheed* [martyr] in the battlefield), the Prophet said to Imam Ali: 'O Ali, you are to me what Harun (Aaron) was to Musa (Moses).

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[7]In the episode of *Hadith-e Qisa'* reported widely in authentic Islamic sources of all schools of thought.

(The only difference is that) there will be no prophets after me.' (9) At Ghadir, the Prophet said clearly: '*Man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha Aliyun mawlahu.*' (Of whoever I am the mawla, (this) Ali is his mawla.'

There are several other occasions where the Prophet clearly indicated the succession of Imam Ali.[8]

The above incidents leave no doubt that the Prophet was already preparing the *Ummah* for the concept of *imama* under whom the *Ummah* would continue to receive guidance. From the merits discussed above, I shall now briefly discuss the last two (numbers 8 and 9). This is because the article has to be brief (but please see footnotes for additional reading material).

It has been wrongly argued by some Muslims, as our sources show,[9] that it was only once that the Prophet uttered the words indicating the status of Imam Ali as that of Harun (Aaron) except that there would be no prophets after him. The fact of the matter is that it was several times, and indeed at different occasions, the Prophet is shown to have uttered this status of Imam Ali. In fact, even Mu'awiya had reminded this *hadith* of the Prophet to someone who had asked him a question and Mu'awiya replied by asking him to seek the answer of such problems from Imam Ali because, as Mu'awiya said, even Umar al-Khattab used to ask Ali for solutions to difficult problems.[10]

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[8]One occasion that I am very tempted to include in this article is the revelation of 5:55 recorded in the Qur'an. This was the occasion when Imam Ali gave away a ring from his finger to a beggar who had entered the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. The ring was given in the state of occasions (*rukuh*). The exegetes tell us that the Prophet, pleased at Imam Ali's action, made a *du'a* to Allah to strengthen his back and appoint Imam Ali as his successor just as Allah had strengthened the back of Prophet Musa (Moses) by appointing for him Harun (Aaron), his brother. The exegetes tell us that hardly had the Prophet completed this *du'a* when this revelation descended: 'Verily your Wali is (none other except) Allah and His Apostle and those who believe, those who establish prayer and pay *zakat* (poor-rate), while (even though) they be in occasions.' For Prophet Musa's *du'a* please see 20:29-32 and 20:36.

[9]See for example *Al-Muraji'at* (translated in Englkish as *The Right Path*), p 171ff.

[10]Allama Sharifuddin quotes this from Ahmad ibn Hanbal's *Musnad*. Also see *The Right Path*, p 178ff.

When the Prophet announced only the door of Imam Ali leading to the inside of the Prophet's mosque be left open to the exclusion of all other doors and explained from the pulpit that it was the command of Allah, the Prophet also added that Ali's position in relation to him was similar to Harun's with Prophet Musa (except that the prophethood will end with Muhammad). In a heart-rendering occasion when the Prophet was establishing the brotherhood between the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, on both occasions the Prophet reserved Imam Ali's brotherhood only for himself and said to him that his (Ali's) position with the Prophet was the same as Harun's position was with Prophet Musa except that there would certainly be no prophets after the prophethood of Muhammad. Imam Ali asked on that occasion, what then, would he inherit? The Prophet replied: 'What the prophets before me left as inheritance: the Book of their Lord and their own *Sunnah* and you will be with my daughter Fatimah in my castle in Paradise and you are my brother and my associate.' Then the Prophet recited this verse from the Qur'an: 'And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury; (they will be) brothers (joyfully) facing each other on thrones (of dignity)' (15:47).[11]

The above events, recorded in authentic Islamic sources, should leave no doubt in anyone's mind that the Prophet clearly showed that: (1) he was the Seal of the Prophets; (2) the guidance of mankind would still continue but in the person of Imam Ali who was endowed with *'ilm*[12] and was the foremost in all respects in the matters of faith; (3) the Imam would inherit the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet with which he could continue to guide mankind; (4) the guidance would continue in his *'Itrat* as outlined in the *hadith* of *al-Thaqalayn*; and (5) the *hadith* of *al-Thaqalayn* clearly showed that the Qur'an and the Prophet's *'Itrat* are inseparable and the guidance

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[11]See *The Right Path*, p 193.

[12]In a popular *hadith* from the Prophet he said: '*Ana medinatu al-'ilmi wa 'Aliyyun babuha.*' ('I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door.')

must be derived from both. In this regard, the Prophet's *ahadith* are clear and demand upon the believers neither to go ahead of the Imams for otherwise they would perish nor to lag behind the Imams for even then they would perish, and never to teach the Imams because the Imams would always be ahead in their knowledge (since they are the bearers of *'ilm-e ladunni* and the hidden knowledge of the Qur'an). In this regard, the Prophet also prophesied that there would emerge misguided people who would try to corrupt Islam but there would also be in all generations true believers of his *Ahl al-Bayt* who would counteract such corruptions. The Prophet warned against choosing such Imams. The *Ahl al-Bayt*, the Prophet said, are like the head of the body (the balanced head will always guide correctly) or like the eyes to the face because the face is guided only by the eyes. In another tradition, the Prophet has said that the *Ahl al-Bayt* are like the Ark of Noah. Those that embark on it are saved and those that reject it are destroyed. Also, in another tradition, they are like the 'Gate of Repentance'[13] of the Bani Israel; those who entered therein were forgiven by Allah.

In this regard, an Imam of the Sunnis, Imam Shafe'i has made a clear point: 'When I saw people led astray by their beliefs in the sea of error and ignorance, in the Name of Allah I boarded the ship of salvation, that is the *Ahl al-Bayt* of Mustafa, the Seal of Prophecy, and I caught hold of the Rope of Allah, that is their love as He commanded us to hold fast to the Rope.'[14]

Humanity, therefore, will not be left without guidance. The Qur'an's purity combined with the Imams' infallible guidance through their *'ilm-e ladunni* will continue to guide mankind in

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[13]This is a reference to the Qur'an 2:57-58. The Bani Israel were given security in the town of plenty by Allah. They were asked to enter the gate with humility seeking forgiveness from Allah and they would be forgiven. The Bani Israel instead changed the special word given them to ask forgiveness as they passed through the gate. As a result Allah sent plagues upon them from heaven because 'they infringed (Allah's commands) repeatedly.'

[14]Allama Sharifuddin has quoted this from *Rishfat al-Saadi* by Imam Abu Bakr ibn Shahabuddeen. See also *The Right Path*, p 40.

the *'Itrat* of the Prophet. In one of the most extra-ordinary traditions the Prophet has said: 'Even if there was only one day left for the world to end, Allah will extend that day until there will emerge a man whose name will be my name and whose family will be my family so that he will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it is filled with tyranny and wickedness.'[15]

The above *hadith* also makes clear that the world itself has a term (*ajal*) and it will come to an end one day. Until such time the Prophet had left a clear guidance he showed both in the very first *khutbah* he gave to his relatives and also at Ghadir. It is interesting to look at both these sermons of the Prophet to see a clear thesis in which the Prophet has charted a path for mankind to follow once and for all. Thus, when the Prophet called his relatives, he clearly established the *usul* of our faith. These principles manifested beautifully in his sermon at Ghadir as well. I shall now turn to both these sermons and end my article.

Like his *khutbah* at Ghadir, his first *khutbah* is also famous and is recorded in many books. The Prophet said:

'(O my relatives, you know that) indeed the leader of the caravan would never betray the people of his own caravan. By Allah, even if I could lie to all mankind I would never lie to you (since you are my very own); and even if I could betray all mankind never would I betray you. I swear by Allah except whom there is no other God (*Tawhid*) that indeed without any doubt, I am the Prophet unto you particularly and to mankind generally (*Nabuwwah*). By Allah you will all die just as you sleep every night. Then you will get up (from your graves) just as you get up every day (from your beds) (*Qiyamah*); and without any doubt, an account will be taken from you for your deeds and you will be awarded with rewards for the good (you did) and be retributed for the evil you did' (*Adalah*). Then he asked, 'So let me know which of you is willing to assist me in this task and to

[15]Syed Haydar al-Amuli, *Jami al-Asrar wa Manba' al-Anwar*, p 102. The explanation given to this *hadith* is that 'filling the earth with justice' means that he (Imam Mahdi) will bring about the rule of Allah (*Tawhid*) — i.e., the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet — in place of polytheism — i.e., *shirk* and corruption.

share my burden, so that he may become my brother and the executor of my will and my successor among you?' (*Imama*)

As we know, it was Imam Ali who stood up and said, 'O Prophet of Allah, I will share this burden of yours.' As we read from the accounts, the Prophet placed his hand on the neck of Imam Ali and said: 'This is my brother and the executor of my will and my successor among you. So listen to him and obey him.'

Thus began the mission of the 'Seal of the Prophets.' As we have already seen Imam Ali played an important role in the *Seerah* of the Prophet and one day as the Prophet had finished his final Hajj and was returning to Medina, Allah commanded him to proclaim the message. The Prophet must have felt the urgency of it because the command was 'If thou didst it not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His Mission...' (5:67). The Prophet halted the caravan. People who were ahead were recalled. The multitude gathered and a quick pulpit was erected. This place was also the junction where people could depart to go to their own towns and therefore was the ideal place for all to listen to what the Prophet had to say for the final time. The *zuhr* prayers were performed in congregation, after which the Prophet climbed up the pulpit (some sources say it was made from the saddles of camels). Here the Prophet began his most eloquent *khutbah* in which we see amazing resemblances of his very first *khutbah* as far as the *usul* of our faith are concerned. With this *khutbah* he asked the multitude to testify that he did deliver the message and thus completed his mission. The Prophet began by praising Allah and said:

'All praise belongs to Allah. In Him do I put my faith and from Him do I crave support. Him do I trust and His protection (do I) seek against the malice of our souls and the evils of our deeds. The misguided have no guide except Him, and those who are guided by Him can never go astray. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Him and that I, Muhammad, am His Slave and Messenger.'

Then he said that Allah had already informed him that the days of his life were coming to an end. He said: 'But you and I, each one of us must answer unto Allah for all the things that are due from us. What then do you say?'

The multitude witnessed this to be so. Then the Prophet asked the multitude if they would also witness that Allah is One, and that he is His Apostle who is speaking to them on His command and the Resurrection and Judgement, Heaven and Hell and the Life Hereafter are all certainties. The multitude again witnessed.

The Prophet continued: 'Now then, listen to me carefully, for I have been commanded to tell you that I will be taken away from your midst, but I leave with you as my legacy (for the whole *Ummah*) two most important things, namely, the Book of Allah (the Qur'an) and my descendants, the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Never shall they be separated from one another, and so long as you adhere to both of them you will never be led astray after me. Therefore, O people, this is my last will and testament unto you that you should always remain faithful to the Qur'an and the *Ahl al-Bayt* as true Muslims until death. Do not lag too far behind them and do not walk ahead of them, for either way you will go astray. But follow them and walk in their footsteps and they will guide you along the Straight Path (*Sirat ul-Mustaqim*).'

The Prophet then asked the multitude if he was not more worthy of their obedience than their own souls. And the multitude replied: 'Yes, verily, yes, O Prophet of Allah.'

The Prophet then lifted Imam Ali and showing him to all sides he said: 'Of whomever I am the *mawla*, (this) Ali is his *mawla*.'

Then he asked the multitude if he had truly and faithfully delivered the message. The multitude replied again: 'Yes, verily, yes, O Prophet of Allah.'

So then, the Prophet said another important statement: 'Let those who are present here convey to those who are absent.'

Now if we ponder over this *khutbah* and compare it with the

very first *khutbah*, we find to our amazement a clear chart of our *usul* and also a clear path for humanity to follow to the end of the term of the human cycle.

The Prophet asked the multitude in this *khutbah* to witness the Unity of Allah (*Tawhid*). Then he told them they will be accountable to Allah (*Adalah*). Then he asked them if he was not the Apostle of Allah (*Nabuwwah*). Then the Prophet proclaimed Imam Ali as the *mawla* of all (*Imama*). Then he asked them to witness that the Resurrection, Judgement, Heaven and Hell and the Life Hereafter are undoubted certainties (*Qiyamah*).

And lastly, he asked the multitude to proclaim this message to all. Clearly this is the duty of Muslims in all generations because the Qur'an calls us the *khayr al-Ummah*, that is, the best ones of the *Ummah* because Muslims are the holders of the truth. We are the *khayr al-Ummah* so we should guide mankind towards salvation for there will be no more prophets but we have the Qur'an and the *Ahl al-Bayt*. With these two weights we can balance ourselves perfectly because just as we are the *khayr al-Ummah*, the Qur'an tells us that we are also the *Ummatan wasatan*, that is, the balanced *Ummah*. We are the *Ummah* of the Prophet whom Allah described as the *Rahmatun lil alamin* (Mercy to the worlds).

We have yet to bring Ghadir in its proper meaning in our *Ummah*. The guidance, however, has never stopped.

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